DECEMBER 3, 2001

THE AMERICAN WAY OF WAR By Robert Kagan

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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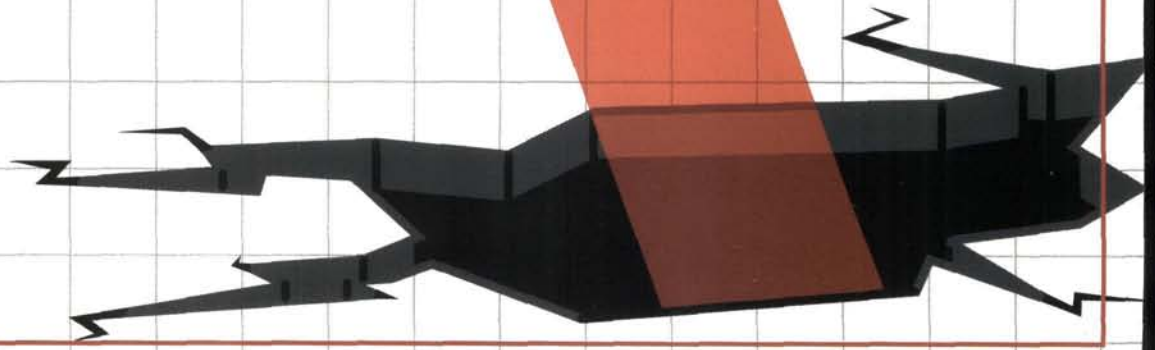
By Ryan Lizza

FUNDAMENTALISM'S FAILURE
By Peter Beinart

WHY THIS RECESSION IS DIFFERENT
By Noam Scheiber



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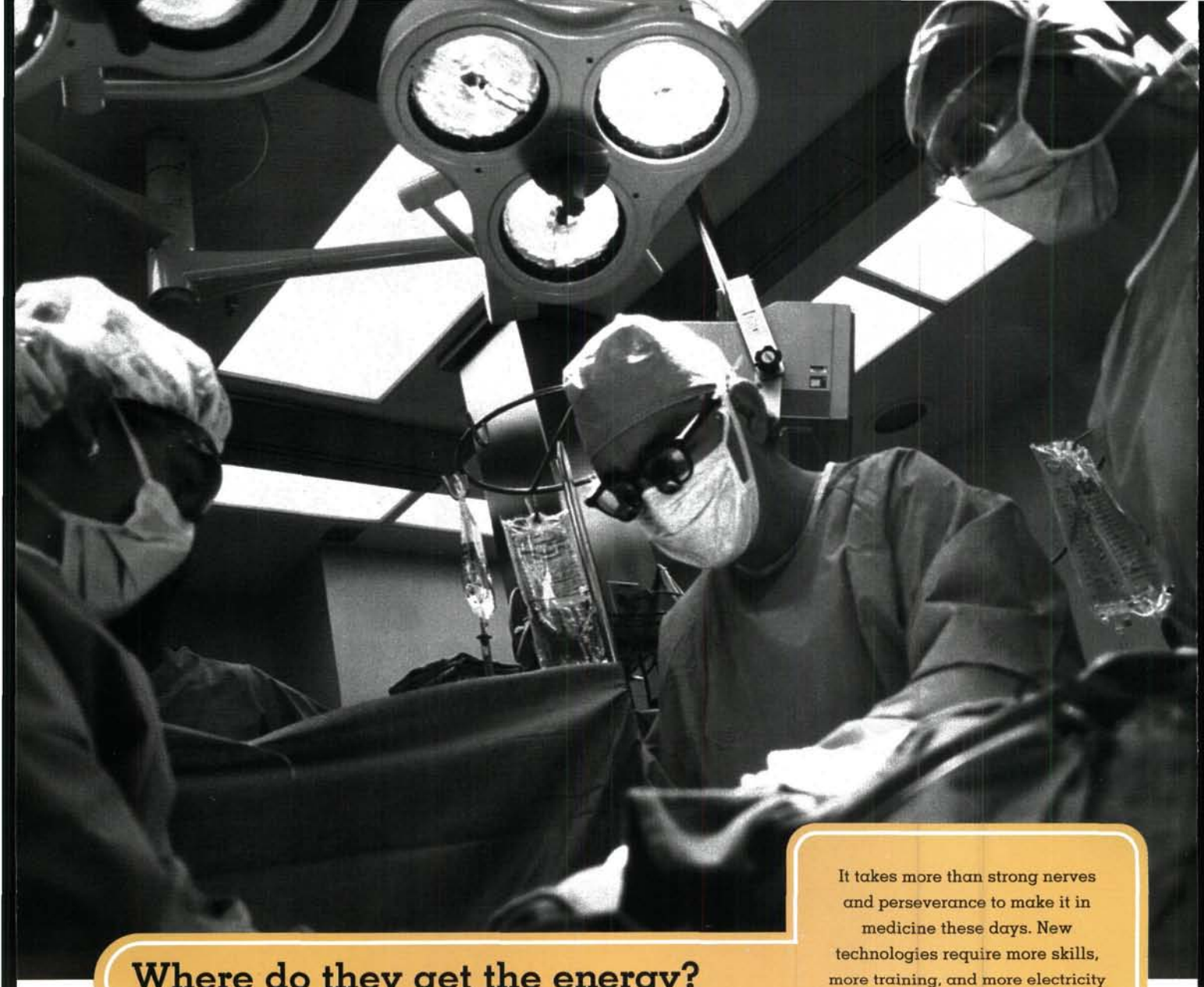

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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Graced

TO THE EDITORS:

The editors were correct to warn us about the debilitating effects that relying on luck or fate can engender ("After Fear," October 29). However, they were certainly mistaken to include grace in their list. While luck and fate are impersonal and directionless, grace is personal and directed toward hope and life. Grace motivated people to build hospitals to care for those for whom society didn't want to care, to go among lepers and social outcasts to offer friendship and sustenance, to go into inner cities to clean up crack houses and restore neighborhoods, and, yes, even to pitch in and do their part to support a war they believed was for a just cause. Grace, courage, and action go together naturally. It seems that Americans could use more of that in our current war.

DR. ROBERT C. BISHOP
Freiburg, Germany

Right turn

TO THE EDITORS:

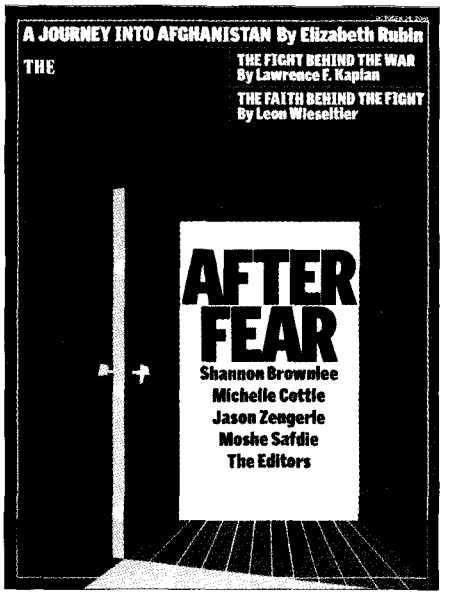
Generally I find Idiocy Watch amusing, but I have to take issue with your inclusion of Paul Begala's comments from *The American Prospect* (Notebook, October 29). His comments were not in regard to the "left" or "right" in general but to particular politicians on the left and the right. Given that so far only ultraconservative Republicans have been trying to use the tragedy of 9/11 to advance their agenda, I think Begala's comments are more apropos than idiotic. I don't see Tom Daschle acting like Dick Armey, Tom DeLay, and their ilk. In fact, if anything, the Democrats have been a little bit too supine in allowing some dubious ideas to get consideration in the name of national unity.

JENNIFER FERGUSON
Andover, Massachusetts

Troop leader

TO THE EDITORS:

Peter Beinart correctly notes that the Republican phobia against nation-building may have contributed to Al Qaeda's ability to find refuge among the wreckage of failed states ("Build Up," October 29). He fails to note, however, that the roots of the Republican hostility toward nation-building lie in the wing of the Republican Party that objects to any activist role for government. Their tax "policy," which amounts to opposition to any tax at all, is designed to deny government the wherewithal to take an activist role in any sphere, whether domestic or foreign. The tragedy is that, by allying with the wing of



the Democratic Party that blames the United States for all the world's ills, and which finds any American initiative in the world "imperialistic," they have paralyzed our foreign policy in any part of the world except, grudgingly, the former Yugoslavia.

R. JOSEPH SHER
Reston, Virginia

TO THE EDITORS:

Peter Beinart's scenario illustrates a permanent problem—not any solution by virtue of some new Republican view of nation-building. Where are the examples of nation-building that remained successful after the troops were withdrawn? Does Beinart seriously believe that peace will remain when the troops withdraw from Kosovo and Bosnia? These matters are a function of how groups of humans prefer to behave—not of Republican caring or threat-perception. For that matter, freedom from terrorism similarly is unrelated to Democrat symbolism. Beinart's idealism is admirable but is inconsistent with reality.

MAURY SISKEL
Fort Worth, Texas

Fighting words

TO THE EDITORS:

Lawrence F. Kaplan's argument that the Pentagon should be free to pursue a military victory with scant regard for what follows ignores Carl von Clausewitz's dictum that war is an extension of politics by other means ("Slow to Anger," October 29). A war's success can ultimately be judged only by political, not operational, criteria. If the regime that replaced the Taliban were stable, the military victory would have contributed to America's longer-term interests. If, on the other hand, the U.S. military campaign yielded the sort of violent, repressive, and isolated regime that the State Department reasonably fears, the military's "victory" would have dealt a further terrible blow to American credibility around the world, alienated allies, and guaranteed the rise of countless new Osama bin Ladens. It's well to remember that bin Laden emerged from the mujahedin that delivered the U.S. "victory" over the Soviets in Afghanistan.

Kaplan's contention that, in the Balkans, state-building began only after military action was over is untrue. In the last year of the Bosnian war, the United States created a sustainable postwar map by supporting Croatia's campaign to retake the Krajina region on the Bosnian frontier, and forcing Croat and Bosnian forces to halt their drive toward the Bosnian-Serb stronghold of Banja Luka. In Kosovo, the NATO air war was prosecuted on the basis of two political agreements—the Rambouillet agreement and the UN Security Council Resolution 1244—that provided the basis for the construction of institutions of self-governance now taking place.

WHIT MASON
Pristina, Kosovo

Anxiety of influence

TO THE EDITORS:

In "Blind Faith," Franklin Foer seeks to discredit David Forte by pointing out that he is neither Muslim nor an Arabic speaker, and thus "not reliable" (October 22). Are all of Foer's experts Muslim, then? The only substantive challenge raised to any of Forte's claims is that he overstresses the extent to which terrorists draw from the doctrine of the discredited *Kharijites, instead of Wahhabism.*

Foer should reread Forte's paper. Forte did not say that Al Qaeda terrorists "practice" the Kharijite doctrine; he says that they "replicate" and "copy" that sect in their extremism, their imagined purity, their violence, and especially their lack of toleration for moderate Muslims.

It's Foer, not Forte, who follows the common liberal habit of moral equivalence in putting all religions in one big box, usually labeled "fundamentalism" or "extremism." The real problem for Foer and his experts is that Forte is an orthodox Catholic, and that he has an influence on the president that they wish they had. We keep hearing that the world has changed since September 11. But some things never change.

DAVID MURRAY
Saint Louis, Missouri

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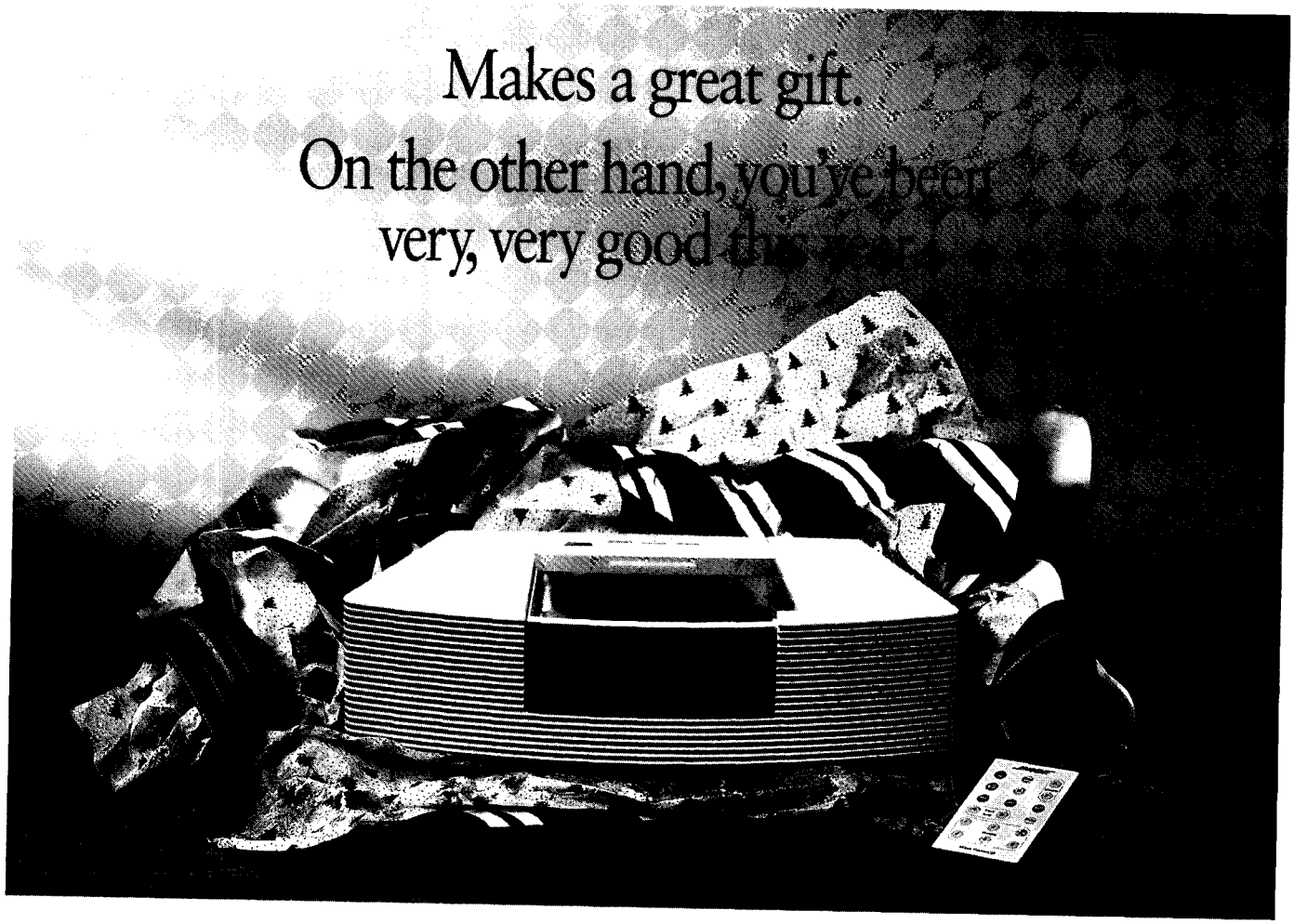

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

New Faith

IF WE ARE lucky, historians will one day compare the liberation of Kabul to the liberation of Prague, Budapest, and East Berlin. I don't mean historians of Central Asia or Eastern Europe; I mean historians of the United States. Because the fall of the Soviet bloc changed America: It ended a half-century-long American debate about whether our notions of democracy and individual rights had meaning in a part of the world that seemed alien and hostile. In 1989 Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians validated American universalism and silenced American relativism.

And then, as the euphoria wore off, relativism slowly came back—this time as much on the right as on the left. In Russia and China, anti-American nationalism overtook pro-American democratization. In Africa, states didn't liberalize; they collapsed. Samuel Huntington and Robert Kaplan replaced Francis Fukuyama as the sages of the day. The world, they argued, was a morally alien place. And their strongest evidence came from lands of Islam—lands yearning for theocracy. Think history has ended? they shouted back at the liberal universalists. Tell it to Algeria.

But nothing validated that emerging relativism as much as September 11. Terrorists murdered 5,000 people because they believed American principles and American power were polluting the Muslim world. And the Muslim world seemed to roar in approval. President Bush implied that Osama bin Laden was a Muslim Timothy McVeigh—a marginal lunatic reviled by his own people. But the evidence on the ground—the Osama T-shirts, the pro-Osama rallies, the "yes but" equivocations of many Muslim governments—seemed to suggest something else. "I estimate that bin Laden enjoys the emotional support of half the Muslim world," wrote Daniel Pipes in *The Washington Times*. "Freedom of speech and worship ... tolerance ... the simple injunction to live and let live," added Michael Skube in *The Washington Post*, "is entirely alien, even malignant, to the greater part of the Islamic world."

One of the great blessings of the liberation of Kabul is that it gave Afghans themselves a chance to answer those arguments—to show how much they hated the vision of society that Osama bin Laden and the Taliban imposed in Islam's name. The most important thing Americans can learn from this first battle of our new war is that those images of shaved beards and blaring radios better represent the spirit of the Muslim world than anything bin Laden proclaimed from his cave. There is, in fact, reason to believe that the aspirations of the Muslim world deeply resemble our own.

One reason Americans don't believe it is that we often use protest marches as our barometers of Muslim public opinion. And there have been quite a few marches on bin Laden's behalf since September 11. But protest marches don't measure popular support as much as they measure commitment and organizational skill. If you were to use mass demonstrations as your guide to what Americans believe, you might assume that the two most popular forces in American politics are the anti-abortion movement and the anti-globalization movement. In fact, both are unpopular; what they share is a dedicated core of supporters and a network able to get them to a given place at a given time. Much the same is true in a country like Pakistan. Militant Islamic groups can send thousands into the streets of Quetta and Peshawar because their supporters are politically fervent, and because their mosques and *madrassas* give them a formidable organizational infrastructure. But at the polls, they do abysmally every time.

The second problem with using protests as a guide to public opinion is that even those people who do chant bin Laden's name might not want him running their country. To take another American analogy, few of the anti-Vietnam protesters who chanted Ho Chi Minh's name wanted him as their president. Praising him was simply another way of saying, "I hate Lyndon Johnson." Similarly, chanting bin Laden's name in Cairo is a way of saying, "I hate Hosni Mubarak." After all, many of the same people who cheered bin Laden cheered Saddam Hussein a decade ago—even though the former is a theocrat and the latter a militant secularist. Neither man's appeal was his vision of how to govern a country, but rather his challenge to a deeply unpopular status quo.

Indeed, when Muslim countries hold free elections, the candidates who champion personal freedom usually win. In 1997 Mohammed Khatami, the obscure head of Iran's national library, came from nowhere to win 70 percent of the popular vote. This summer he won reelection with 77 percent. One of his key promises: to loosen the restrictions—on dress, dancing, music, and the press—that Iranians so loathe. As Mohammed Reza Khatami, the president's younger brother and close political ally, put it in a speech this May, "We believe in the type of Islam that never, ever allows us to interfere with the private lives of individuals."

In 1999, when Indonesia held its first democratic election in decades, it chose Abdurrahman Wahid, a cleric and the head of Nudlatul Ulama, the world's largest Muslim organization. A victory for fundamentalism? Hardly. Wahid promptly told the *Bangkok Post*, "We are not like those Muslims who believe there is a conflict between universal human rights and the Islamic religion. We believe in human rights, diversity and religious tolerance." And then he repealed Indonesia's long-standing restrictions on the construction of churches and Hindu temples, and allowed the first public celebrations of the Chinese New Year since the 1960s. When charges of corruption and incompetence eventually drove Wahid from power, he was replaced by the head of Indonesia's second-most popular political bloc, Megawati Sukarnoputri—a secular woman.

For all the rhetoric about bin Laden winning the hearts and minds of the Muslim world, an Islamist party has really only won one national election since the end of the cold war: in Algeria in 1991. But, even there, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS)—running against a deeply corrupt ruling party presiding over a ruined economy—only won 47 percent of the vote, before the army canceled the elections. In Turkey, the Welfare Party (now renamed the Virtue Party) claimed 21 percent in 1995—enough to briefly lead a coalition government. But, although often called Islamist, Welfare succeeded because it generally advocated free religious expression—for instance, the right to wear the veil in classrooms and government offices—and explicitly rejected any state effort to impose religion. In fact, a public opinion survey in 1997 showed that when Turks were asked whether they supported Islamic laws on marriage, inheritance, and crime, they overwhelmingly said no.

This is the same message we heard last week in Afghanistan. And we should remember it the next time relativists say that Muslims support bin Laden's vision of society, not America's. The truth is that Islamism is like communism: Because it strips people of their basic right to be left alone, it will engender resentment once it gains power. Islamists rarely win elections, and they never win reelection. And if they cling to power anyway, America should help overthrow them—secure in the knowledge that the people of the Muslim world, like the people of Eastern Europe before them, would want nothing less.

PETER BEINART

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Louisville Slugger

THE BANALITY OF Colin Powell's address on American foreign policy in Louisville last week was breathtaking. Not even his large-and-in-charge style of oratory, the increasingly irksome manner of the motivational speaker for whom every trivial remark is more proof of his mettle, could lift these ancient prescriptions for peace between Israel and the Palestinians into anything resembling urgency. Israel must have security, the Palestinians must have dignity, there must be two states on the west bank of the Jordan, the violence must stop. Uh-huh. But this is not to say that the Louisville address was not important. Quite the contrary. Read properly, the secretary of state's speech furnished an unwitting and disconcerting glimpse into the latent tendencies of his thinking.

There is no question that the condition of Israeli-Palestinian relations is terrifying, no question that the ugliness on the ground should fill all who behold it with dread. This cataclysm needs to be analyzed historically, of course; and such an analysis must include, in its explanation of the proximate cause of the crisis, the refusal of Yasir Arafat to accept Ehud Barak's extraordinary concessions at Camp David (and then at Taba) last year, and his subsequent preference for intifada over diplomacy. Powell made no such analysis. He spoke as if we had learned nothing in the last year that we did not know before; as if these were still the peace process's years of innocence. Unlike other advocates of the resumption of the peace process, however, the secretary of state did not seek to summon back the spirit of Oslo, or the spirit of Camp David. He invoked instead "the spirit of Madrid." That is the tip-off.

Powell was referring to the Middle East peace conference that was convened in Madrid a decade ago, in the aftermath of Operation Desert Storm. "I watched with ... pride," he recalled, "as Arabs and Israelis gathered together in the aftermath of the Gulf war. They gathered together in Madrid to take advantage of the opportunity created by the successful war. They took the opportunity to launch a historic process of negotiations aimed at ending their conflicts once and for all. They, too, were supported by an American-led coalition, one focused this time on peace rather than on war." Madrid, it should be noted, was a failure. And Powell's comment confirms yet again the premise of his sense of American strategy: so as never to fight the Vietnam way, he wishes always to fight the Gulf way. For the secretary of state, it is 1991 or nothing. But Powell's statement betrays also more concrete errors: that the war in the Gulf, for example, was a "successful war." If we were successful in Operation Desert Storm, it was because we defined our way to success, by excluding the overthrow of Saddam Hussein from our definition of it. In the real world of authoritarian regimes and weapons of mass destruction, we failed.

Powell's comment also reveals the connection in his mind between the use of American military force in the orbit of Islam and the fate of Palestine. The connection is this: he appears to believe that we compensate certain Arab governments politically for our military intervention in their region, even if our intervention was for their sake; and that we must compensate them by delivering a Palestinian state to the Palestinians. Madrid in 1991 was an attempt at such compensation; and so was Louisville last week. The notion that Operation Enduring Freedom must be accompanied by a resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, in other words, represents an intellectual and diplomatic capitulation to the Arab understanding of the situation.

Powell is making this concession of principle to Riyadh and Cairo even as the repugnant governments in those capitals do nothing or next to nothing to assist us in our war against the terrorists whom they created and then loosed on the world. (It is not an Afghan war that we are fighting in Afghanistan, it is a Middle Eastern war. There is not a single figure in Al Qaeda's high command who is not an Arab.) Indeed, the timing of Powell's appeal for progress in Palestine is a kind of bizarre ratification of Osama bin Laden's view of the problem. There is bin Laden attempting to persuade the Muslim world that what he wants is justice for the Palestinians, and here is Powell attempting to persuade the Muslim world that what he wants is justice for the Palestinians.

"Terror and violence must stop now," Powell said. Applause. "The incitement [to the killing of Israelis by Palestinian terrorists] must stop," Powell said. Applause. It sounds tough and right. But what are these "musts," really? At best they are homiletical flourishes, at worst they are insults to the intelligence of the Israelis. For they have been uttered a thousand times before, and futilely. Even distinguished peace processors such as Dennis Ross and Edward Walker have confessed that Arafat will deliver nothing. But our can-do secretary of state was slugging in Louisville, asking Israel to be not only unsafe but also stupid. ■

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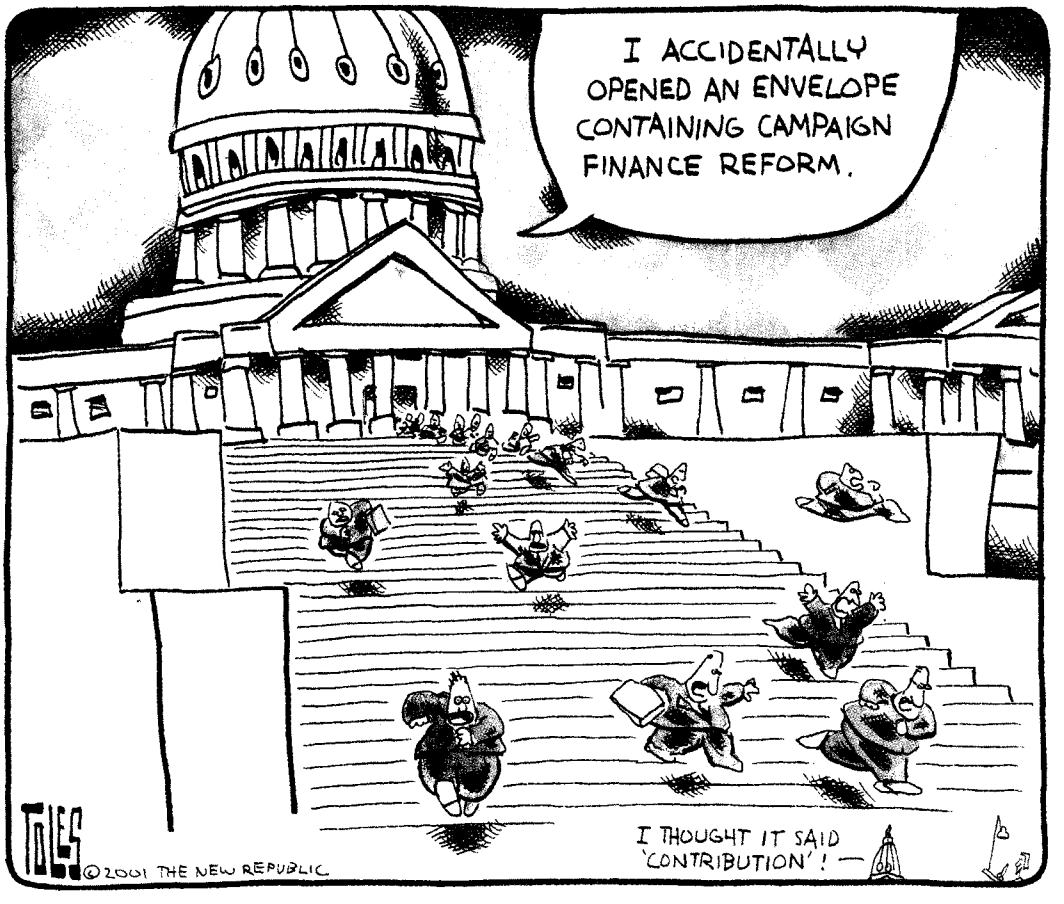
NOTEBOOK

WOMEN'S WORK: This week the administration kicked off its "world-wide effort to focus on the brutality against women and children" by Al Qaeda and the Taliban. "The president," adviser Mary Matalin told *The Washington Post*, "doesn't see this as a women's issue. He sees it as a justice issue." Which is why it's downright baffling that the women of Washington are pursuing the campaign essentially—and proudly—without men. The effort was launched on the president's weekly radio address—which, for the first time in history, he turned over to his wife. The campaign, according to the *Post*, was created by Karen Hughes, the White House's most powerful woman. On Friday, Paula Dobriansky, undersecretary of state for global affairs, held a women's issues conference call with—you guessed it—female members of the House and Senate. Indeed, the ladies of the Senate are on the front lines of the war against the war against women: Joining Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison in sponsoring the Afghan Women and Children Relief Act are . . . the other twelve women of the Senate. (Not one of the 87 fellas in the Senate shared the honor.) Hutchison added to the feminine mush-fest on Saturday on CNN, praising the plan to have Laura Bush "rally all the women of our country and world" and predicting that the "women members of the Senate and House are going to pass this bill." (Alone?) For years feminist groups have condemned the Taliban's treatment of women as "gender apartheid." Perhaps they should consider condemning gender apartheid at home as well.

ADVERTORIAL?: "Cholesterol-lowering drugs safely reduced the risk of a heart attack or stroke by one-third in the world's largest study of people at high risk for these conditions. . . . The study tested a powerful cholesterol-lowering drug, simvastatin, or Zocor, that belongs to the class known as statins. . . . [E]xperts said the results were stunning, had important public health implications and provided reassurance about the safety and benefits of statins."—*The New York Times*, November 14

"A clinical study among people with high cholesterol and heart disease found 42% fewer deaths from heart attack among those taking ZOCOR. One tablet, taken once a day, can help people with high cholesterol and heart disease live a longer, healthier life."—Full-page, color advertisement for ZOCOR, appearing on the facing page of the same edition of the *Times* (Thanks to Ilene Chait of West Bloomfield, Michigan.)

OUR MAN IN LIBERIA: Two weeks ago TNR detailed the personal and business ties between several prominent Washington figures—including Jesse Jackson, Pat Robertson, and Democratic attorney Lester Hyman—and Liberian warlord Charles Taylor ("Double Take," by Ryan Lizza, November 19). The article was occasioned, in part, by an article by *The Washington Post*'s Douglas Farah revealing that a Taylor crony named Ibrahim Bah was selling diamonds to Al Qaeda, with the Liberian dictator's blessing and assistance. It appears that Taylor and Bah weren't happy with Farah's article: After receiving credible threats that Bah and Liberian officials intended to harm him, Farah, his pregnant wife, and their two-year-old son were evacuated from their home in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, last week. This followed a smear campaign by a website, operated by the Liberian government, that accused Farah of a variety of crimes against Liberia and posted a photograph of him. So add threatening an American reporter's life to a list of Taylor's crimes that includes helping finance Al Qaeda and starting a horrifying civil war in neighboring Sierra Leone. Mean-


I ACCIDENTALLY OPENED AN ENVELOPE CONTAINING CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM.
TOLES ©2001 THE NEW REPUBLIC
I THOUGHT IT SAID 'CONTRIBUTION'!

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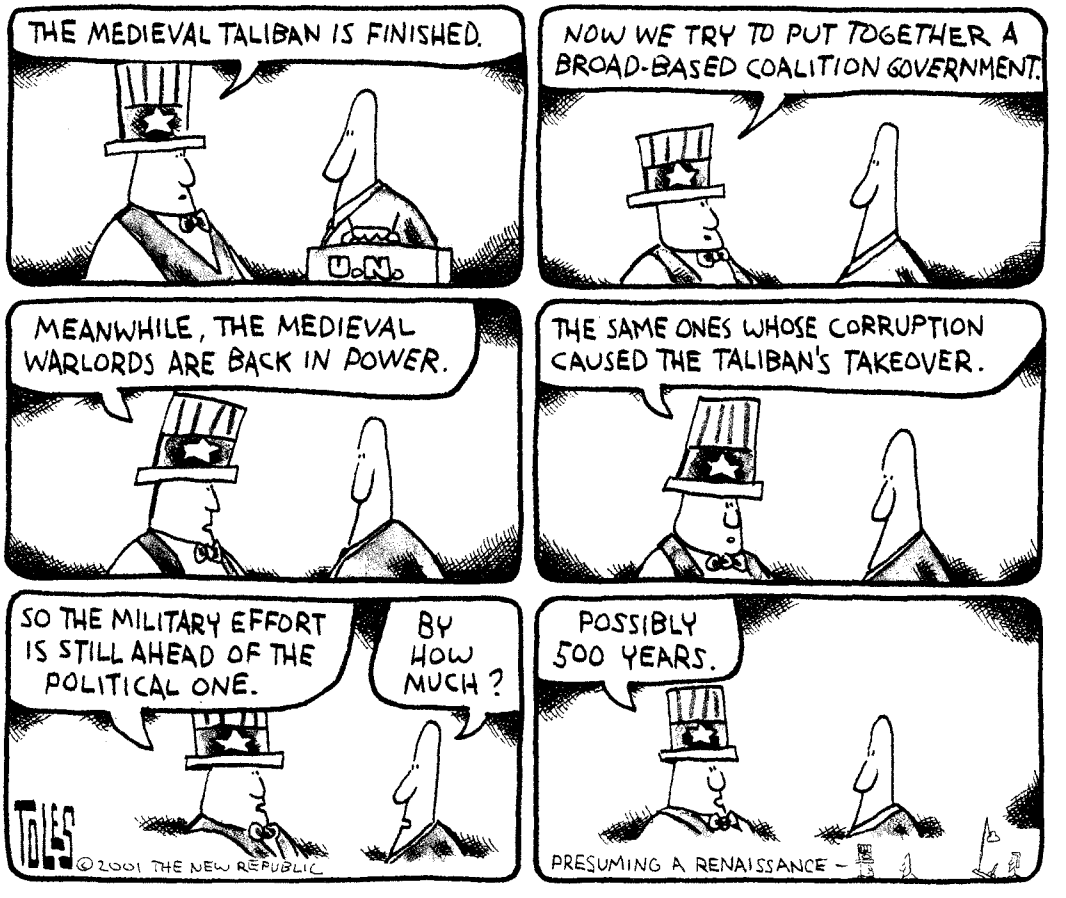
while, last we checked, Pat Robertson remains partners with Taylor in a Liberian gold-mining venture; Hyman has yet to repudiate his longtime Liberian client; and Jackson hasn't renounced the man he befriended during his tenure as "Special Envoy" to Africa. Turns out September 11 hasn't changed some things at all.

NUCLEAR BOMB MANUFACTURING FOR DUMMIES: There's nothing more terrifying than the possibility that Osama bin Laden might fulfill his dream of developing an "Islamic bomb." And last week the London *Times*' Anthony Loyd reported that documents from a former Al Qaeda safe house in newly liberated Kabul showed that bin Laden's dream seemed close to being realized. Under the headline "BIN LADEN'S NUCLEAR SECRETS FOUND IN AL QAEDA'S KABUL SAFE HOUSES," Loyd reported that he had discovered "notes [that] give detailed designs for ... nuclear weapons. There are descriptions of how the detonation of TNT compresses plutonium into a critical mass, sparking a chain reaction, and ultimately a thermo-nuclear reaction." So serious was Loyd's report that Tom Ridge commented on it at his weekly briefing. But now a website called *rotten.com* has revealed that the nuclear plans Loyd discovered aren't so terrifying after all. In fact, bin Laden's "nuclear secrets" appear to be cribbed from a 1979 article titled "How to Build an Atom Bomb" that was published in the spoof science magazine, *Journal of Irreproducible Results* (since renamed *The Annals of Improbable Research*). According to *Irreproducible Results*, building a bomb is easy: "The device basically works when the detonated TNT compresses the Plutonium into a critical mass. The critical mass then produces a nuclear chain reaction similar to the domino chain reaction.... The chain reaction then promptly produces a big thermonuclear reaction. And there you have it, a 10 megaton explosion!" Sound familiar? Heaven forbid bin Laden gets his hands on other *Irreproducible Results* articles promoted in the same issue, such as "Let's Make An Anti-Gravity Machine" and "How to Clone Your Neighbor's Wife."

IDIOCY WATCH, CONT'D: "U.S. propaganda portrays Al Qaeda and the Taliban as one and the same—a gang of dark-skinned subhuman monsters who must be squashed like cockroaches, by any means necessary. This is exactly how American propaganda depicted the Japanese in World War II—little yellow guys who lost their equilibrium at night. The white Germans, on the other hand, were viewed as just like us: clearheaded, tough, clean fighters. To get rid of these nasty tan bugs, we're hitting them with everything we've got."—James Ridgeway, *The Village Voice*, November 20

OPENING NIGHT: Mindy Aloff is a hard act to follow, but readers of Jennifer Homans's recent pieces in our pages on Jerome Robbins and Maya Plisetskaya will be glad to hear that with this issue she joins TNR's masthead as our new dance critic. Homans knows her subject inside and out. She was trained as a dancer at the School of American Ballet in New York, though her interests also encompassed the study of modern, jazz, and ethnic dance styles, and she danced professionally with the Chicago Lyric Opera Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, and Pacific Northwest Ballet. She studied literature at Columbia University, and is completing a doctorate in modern European history at New York University, with a history of the origins of classical ballet in France. We are delighted to welcome her to our company as one of our principals. ■


THE MEDIEVAL TALIBAN IS FINISHED.
U.N.
NOW WE TRY TO PUT TOGETHER A BROAD-BASED COALITION GOVERNMENT.
MEANWHILE, THE MEDIEVAL WARLORDS ARE BACK IN POWER.
THE SAME ONES WHOSE CORRUPTION CAUSED THE TALIBAN'S TAKEOVER.
SO THE MILITARY EFFORT IS STILL AHEAD OF THE POLITICAL ONE.
BY HOW MUCH?
TOLES ©2001 THE NEW REPUBLIC
POSSIBLY 500 YEARS.
PRESUMING A RENAISSANCE –

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White House Watch

Finding Fault

By Ryan Lizza

Congressional Republicans lost the fight over the airline security bill—which President Bush signed into law on Monday—on October 28, when Bush's chief of staff, Andy Card, cheerily announced on "Meet the Press" that the president would sign any bill that landed on his desk. Bush still twisted arms to help the House pass a version that didn't federalize security screeners. But Card's announcement emboldened the Democrats. "What that said to us," says an aide to Democrat Fritz Hollings, the bill's Senate sponsor, "was he'll sign what he gets." And when Senate and House negotiators went into conference to hammer out a final bill, the White House was AWOL, leaving the congressional GOP with little choice but to cave. One House leadership aide snipes, "My take on Andy Card is that on the rare occasions he reared his ugly head on this issue, it was unhelpful to the president's supposed position and really caused a lot of confusion and frustration amongst House Republicans. This is the kind of stuff that got Bush's father into trouble."

Card's statement revived old conservative doubts about the ideological pedigree of the senior White House staff's most liberal member. As a Massachusetts state representative in the 1970s, Card opposed a resolution asking Congress to ban abortion. He was Bush père's deputy chief of staff when the former president signed the tax hike in 1990, and in 1989 he opened negotiations with Ted Kennedy on a minimum wage increase that conservatives opposed. So when the administration abandoned House Republicans on air security, Card was the perfect villain. Tom DeLay peddled the story that when Card announced at a White House meeting that the administration's stance on the legislation had changed, Bush shot back, "Who gave you the authority to change my position?" An off-the-cuff remark by Card about chiefs of staff staying in their jobs no longer than a couple of years fueled rumors that he had lost the president's confidence. A Bob Novak column suggested Card was on his way out the door.

Don't bet on it. Card wasn't undermining Bush; he was playing exactly the role Bush hired him to play: spear-catcher. Says one Bush adviser of Card's "Meet the Press" appearance, "Andy did his job. And then they [conservatives] pound the shit out of Andy Card. And he'll never complain and he'll never whine about it. That's his job."

Temperamentally, Card is extremely well suited to taking abuse. He has none of the self-importance of former chiefs of staff like H.R. Haldeman, Jim Baker, Don Regan, or John Sununu. In fact, Card's self-deprecation borders on masochism. When Bush asked him to run the Republican convention last year, Card told the campaign that "they had the right to change their mind." As he explained to a Massachusetts newspaper, "It was easy for me to say yes, but I wanted to make sure they had considered who Andy Card is. And if there were better choices, to have the courage to admit it to me." Earlier this year he told reporters, "I work very hard to have the president's confidence, but not to be his friend—because he has to have the courage to fire me when I'm not doing the job well." In fact, while insiders speculated that Card's recent statement that chiefs of staff only serve an average of 18 months was related to the airline security dustup, he had actually made similar—sometimes identical—comments in February, April, May, and August. He is virtually obsessed with the idea that he's replaceable.

In one respect, the predecessor whom Card most resembles is Eisenhower's legendary chief of staff, Sherman Adams, described in Samuel Kernell and Samuel L. Popkin's *Chief of Staff* as known for his "efficient performance of unpleasant tasks." That's Card to a T. "He is the ultimate good soldier," says Chris Black, a former *Boston Globe* reporter who has known Card for more than 25 years. During the transition from Reagan to Bush, Card was charged with collecting the ID badges of ex-Reagan staffers who overstayed their welcome. On the second day of the first Bush administration, John Sununu bounced around the Oval Office in Velcro sneakers, corduroys, and shirtsleeves. The president told Card to tell Sununu to wear a coat and tie in the West Wing. A few years later he told Card to fire him.

As chief of staff, Card has repeatedly jumped on grenades for the president. In W.'s first week in office, he angered conservatives by signaling (correctly) that Bush would not fight for the vouchers provision in his education plan. When an uproar greeted Card's remarks to *USA Today* that he planned to eliminate Clinton-era White House offices dealing with AIDS and race relations, Card told Ari Fleischer to inform the media that he had made a "mistake," a word rarely heard in the Bush White House. He even apologizes for events clearly outside his control. When Senator Jim Jeffords left the Republican Party, Karl Rove mused darkly about "deals, and bargains, and pledges," while Fleischer explained that Jeffords "does things for quirky reasons." Card blamed himself: "I wish I had served the president better," he told the Associated Press. Perhaps most painfully, Card, who became an advocate of stem-cell research after his father died of Parkinson's disease and his mother of Alzheimer's, was dispatched to the Sunday talk shows to defend Bush's decision last August to limit federal funds for such research.

Another reason some think Card won't remain in the White House much longer is that he wants to run for statewide office in Massachusetts. As recently as August he was quoted as saying, "It's no secret that I love Massachusetts and I've always said the governorship would be my dream job." And, as his visits there piled up earlier this year, it seemed he might be angling to run for the Republican nomination. Now that incumbent Republican Governor Jane Swift has decided to run for reelection, some speculate that Card will challenge Massachusetts Senator John Kerry next year instead.

But the truth is that Card has been talking about running in Massachusetts for two decades—ever since 1982, when he

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Battered America

Jennifer Roback Morse is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution.

The message of the Blame America Firsters, at home and abroad, in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11, is that "America had it coming."

This is not a time for self-indictment. This is a time for self-defense. Everyone has a natural right to self-defense. We do not have to prove that we are perfect before we have the right to protect ourselves. Consider a woman who staggers into a neighbor's house, her face bruised, nose bleeding, clothes torn. She tells her neighbor that her husband has beaten her, only to be told, "Those are horrific injuries. You must have really provoked him to make him do a thing like that." This is the message of the Blame America First crowd. To defend oneself, a woman or a nation needs to believe that she has a right to live, without continually apologizing for her existence.

You may reply that the analogy between national self-protection and protection against domestic violence doesn't work. The battered wife should not retaliate privately. She should call the police, get a restraining order, set the wheels of the criminal justice system into motion, rather than resort to violence herself.

This response misses the point: **The police and criminal justice system rely on violence to keep social peace.** Criminals rarely volunteer to go to prison or even to trial. The police must use force to apprehend and detain them. This organized use of violence in society helps minimize the random violence of domestic assault and other crimes.

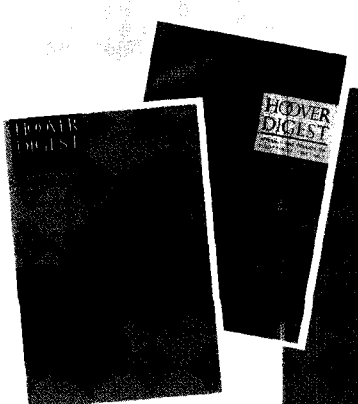
In international affairs, military action can contribute to the deterrence of crime and the apprehension of criminals. **It is not good enough to say that we ought to rely solely on the international courts.** Osama bin Laden is already under indictment for the bombings of U.S. embassies. Indictments by themselves do not serve justice unless the criminal is actually captured and brought to trial.

It is not unusual for a battered woman to make excuses for the abuser. "I really did nag him. I really did burn dinner. He really did have reason to complain." Counselors at battered women's shelters patiently explain that she is entitled to be safe in her own home. She does not have to be perfect in order to protect herself. The perpetrator's "reasons" for the battering are not reasons at all but excuses. Battered women's shelters are full of women who secretly or not so secretly believe that they deserved the punishment they received at the hands of their abusers.

Some of America's critics are comparable to a neighbor who says, "Just clean yourself up, go on home and fix him his favorite dinner. He will treat you right if you just shape up." If she ends up battered again, that irresponsible neighbor bears some of the accountability. So too, will the Blame America First crowd bear some responsibility for the consequences of draining our will to defend ourselves.

— Jennifer Roback Morse

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University



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ran for the GOP nomination for governor and came in third in a three-man field. He hinted he would run for the Senate in 1984. He almost ran for governor in 1986. He came close to challenging Ted Kennedy in 1988. He all but announced his gubernatorial campaign in 1990. He set up a committee to explore a challenge to Kennedy in 1994. In every one of those instances, save the last, he decided to remain in his job: working at the White House. ■

Why all Pashtuns aren't alike.

Local Time

By Benjamin Soskis

Is there anything so fleeting as good news in Afghanistan? Last week, even as the Northern Alliance swept through the country's North, the situation in the South cast a pall over the celebration. The Alliance, after all, consists mostly of Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras—all ethnic minorities in Afghanistan—while the South consists primarily of Pashtuns—the largest ethnic group in the country. Pashtuns have ruled Afghanistan for nearly all of the last three centuries, and as Alliance forces rolled into Kabul, pessimists warned that Pashtuns would never tolerate a Northern Alliance-led government there. Soon Western diplomacy seemed focused almost exclusively—and a little desperately—on the need to gather Pashtun and non-Pashtun leaders to achieve a Camp David-style resolution between the two groups.

There's no question that ethnic identity is a potent force in Afghanistan. The decision by Northern Alliance leader Burhanuddin Rabbani to install himself in the presidential palace has clearly inflamed Pashtun anxieties. News that Ismael Khan, a Tajik leader from Herat, was considering moving his forces toward Pashtun-dominated Kandahar didn't help either. But just because ethnicity is a factor in Afghan politics doesn't make it the *only* factor. Throughout the South in particular, local identity can be just as important. Indeed, the Pashtuns are not a cohesive unit with a single spokesperson; rather they are divided into more than a dozen tribes, each with its own subdivisions and leadership hierarchies. Similarly, Afghan national identity is not as feeble as outsiders commonly assume. The men and women of Herat, Kabul, and Kandahar are not only Pashtuns and Tajiks; they are also Afghans. In other words, by focusing overwhelmingly on the split between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns, the American media might be both overestimating the challenge of cobbling together a legitimate, post-Taliban government, and underestimating it at the same time.

Perhaps it's no surprise that Westerners instinctively turn to ethnicity to understand Afghanistan. Many journalists and foreign observers are simply applying the template from the last decade's signature conflict—the Balkans wars. As Thomas Barfield, professor of anthropology at Boston University, explains, "We bring our models of rival ethnic groups, we see Serbs battling Croatians, we see ethnic cleansing and massacres." In addition, America's key ally in the war on the Taliban—Pakistan—has repeatedly warned about the vital importance of mollifying Pashtun concerns.

But Islamabad's analysis is hardly disinterested: The ethnic groups of the Northern Alliance have strong ties to Pakistan's regional rivals—Russia, Iran, and India. As for the Balkan analogy, it's worth noting that despite decades of internecine feuding among Afghanistan's various ethnic factions, the country has never actually surrendered to Balkanization. As journalist Michael Griffin writes in *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Taliban Movement in Afghanistan*, "One of the paradoxes of Afghanistan is that, although made up of over 50 ethnic groups often locked in combat, no minority has ever sought to secede and most fully identify with their common nationality." In fact, Griffin notes, when the United Nations initiated a fact-finding tour during the civil war in the mid-1990s, they received more than 300 settlement proposals, "none of which raised the question of partition."

And if ethnic identity in Afghanistan is less dominant than most outsiders assume, local, subethnic identity is almost certainly more so. Larry Goodson, professor of international studies at Bentley College, insists that the most important structures of power and authority in Afghanistan are the "hundreds of groups that are headed by a guy and his brother and some cousins, and some friends from the village or from the valley." As Goodson writes in *Afghanistan's Endless War*, "[t]he allegiance of the individual almost never goes beyond the tribal unit." Instead, loyalty centers on what Afghans call a *qawm*, the network of solidarity groups—based in many cases on feudal arrangements of patronage—around which social life is structured.

In part, these strong local attachments flow from Afghanistan's history and topography. Its mountainous terrain, coupled with its lack of a rail system or dependable roads, produced isolated tribal enclaves, while the dependence on subsistence agriculture ensured little trade or constructive contact between them. And Afghanistan's record of successfully repelling foreign invaders means that it never suffered under, and then overthrew, colonial rule—the experience that forged national identity in many other Third World countries.

Even so, national identity is not entirely alien to Afghanistan. Afghans united, albeit briefly, to repel the Soviets during the 1980s. More recently, the presence of so many Pakistani, Chechen, and Arab troops among the Taliban has stoked Afghan pride. This nationalism is not always pretty—witness the xenophobic slurs and wanton cruelties meted out to foreign Taliban prisoners—but it makes the chances of reconciliation among Afghanistan's factions more likely. Already, Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun tribal leader and former deputy foreign minister in the pre-Taliban government, has tried to draw on such sentiments to secure the peaceful surrender of Taliban forces in the South. Referring to Afghan Taliban as "our brothers," he has insisted that they be reincorporated into Afghan society. As he told one journalist, "the majority of Taliban, the common Taliban, the

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Talib with the gun—that's an Afghan man, and he will go and live his life like other Afghans live their lives."

If one source of national identity comes from the battle against Al Qaeda interlopers, another is waiting patiently in a leafy suburb of Rome: the country's exiled king, Zahir Shah, whose overthrow in 1973 ended a 200-year-old monarchy. Although few Afghans advocate the restitution of the monarchy itself, many seek the 87-year-old king's return, to serve as the symbolic head of a *loya jirga*, an ancient Afghan tradition in which tribal and religious leaders convene to make national decisions (see "Circle Game," November 12). Although Zahir Shah hails from the Pashtun's dominant Durrani tribe, the cosmopolitanism of Afghan court life allowed him to transcend ethnic parochialism. (While king, he spoke French better than Pashto, for example.) So both Pashtun and non-Pashtun Afghans have embraced his return. In early October leaders of the Northern Alliance struck a deal with Shah's supporters to begin proceedings for a *loya jirga*; later that month some 800 Pashtun tribal leaders from Afghanistan's South held a meeting in Peshawar, Pakistan, in which they affirmed their support for the king.

In a sense, the Taliban's rapid collapse is testament to the strength that national and local Afghan identity still enjoys. Because of their international composition and emphasis on religious rather than national allegiance, the Taliban never successfully appealed to Afghan nationalism. Indeed, because of the Taliban's ties to Al Qaeda, many Afghans regarded them as an essentially foreign force. And by the same token, while the Taliban consolidated power by appeasing local leaders—buying their neutrality or support with money or promises of positions—once in power they largely ignored tribal identity, preferring an all-encompassing religious fanaticism. Slogans popular among the Taliban faithful included: "I am first a Muslim" and "I don't have a *qawm*." The Taliban's reclusive leader, Mullah Omar, imprudently installed Pashtuns from Kandahar in leadership positions throughout the country, and favored one particular tribe, the Durranis, to the relative exclusion of all others. The result was that the Taliban built few ties to local tribal leaders—leaders who quickly turned on the Taliban when their vulnerability became apparent.

The United States and its allies can avoid these mistakes, and begin to overcome the Pashtun/non-Pashtun divide, by utilizing the same national and tribal identities that the Taliban largely discounted. For starters, there is Zahir Shah's return. Plans for a *loyal jirga* have stalled in recent weeks, as the Northern Alliance has seemed to lose interest in dealing with the ex-king. As one royalist told Agence France-Presse last week, "The alliance leaders inside the country have either become too proud . . . or they are really too busy." It would not be a sign of ingratitude for the United States to remind our Northern Alliance allies that Rabbani is not a symbol of Afghan national identity; Zahir Shah is. As soon as possible, the king should publicly begin planning a *loya jirga*. Even if the assembled Afghan leaders resolved little on their own, their deference to a distinguished Afghan tradition could help unite the country nonetheless.

Even more important is a focus on *qawm*. As soon as the fighting dies down, the United States and its allies should approach tribal leaders with an offer—and an implicit threat. America should ask them to distribute reconstruction aid to their supporters; if the leaders refuse, or steal the aid, or continue to feud among themselves, we should make the same offer to a more compliant tribal representative. As Barfield says, "Let's turn them into ward politicians, not warlords." The creation of roads, schools, and jobs will help cement Afghan allegiance to these pro-Western leaders. And, as Goodson suggests, if we can "keep the local elites down on the farm, they won't be in constant battle with one another on the national level."

The late Louis Dupree, one of world's foremost scholars of Afghanistan, described the country's history as a dialectic of centrifugal and centripetal forces—a contest between "fusion and fission." By harnessing tribal identity in service of national unity, the United States might just channel the energies of fission for the project of fusion. It is a project that Afghanistan, and the world, badly needs to succeed. ■

San Francisco Dispatch

Disoriented

By Franklin Foer

The officials of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) began planning its 2001 conference last fall. Among the 144 panels they ultimately scheduled for the gathering, held last weekend in San Francisco, were discussions on "Islam, Globalization and Feminist Networks" and "Civil Society and the State in Yemen." But it wasn't until the suicide hijacking of four American airliners that the conference organizers must have realized an omission: There was no planned discussion of terrorism. To correct the oversight, a seminar on "September 11: Responses and Future Implications" was hastily cobbled together.

Given that MESA is the discipline's premier organization—drawing professors from Israel and the Arab world as well as the United States—one might have anticipated a controversial session. One would have been wrong. In response to the American University of Cairo's Bahgat Korany's description of "anti-American rage on the Arab street," a large mustachioed man rose from the audience. "The word 'Arab street' has racist connotations. It implies an unthinking mob," he exclaimed. Korany quickly backed down.

The panel and the audience came together on the war against terrorism, too: They don't like it. "We have not shown that our actions differentiate us from those who attacked us," Georgetown University's Michael Hudson told the hotel ballroom. His co-panelist from Villanova, Ann Lesch, simply assumed that her listeners were against America's war, and proceeded directly to the question of how to persuade the public to oppose "the United States' hegemonic role in the

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region." There was a brief moment of suspense when a woman from the audience, shaking with anger, approached a microphone to ask Lesch and Hudson a question. But her rage, it turned out, wasn't directed at them. "We have appropriated the Egyptian and Israeli methods of dealing with terrorism. This destroys the credibility of America lecturing anyone about human rights, blah, blah, blah." She received an ovation.

That MESA's members oppose the war is hardly surprising; they are academics, after all. But unlike other academics, what MESAns think actually matters: They're the ones who are supposed to produce the scholarship on Islam and the Arab world that deepens our understanding of the terrorists, their motivations, and their sympathizers. There's even the possibility, post-9/11, of Middle East scholars convincing Congress and private foundations to pump large sums into their departments. But if the MESA conference is any guide, it won't do much good. For the past decade, professors of Middle East Studies have generally apologized for Islamism and called "terrorism" a racist term. And in San Francisco last weekend, they showed no signs of reconsidering.

THERE WAS ONE universally acknowledged villain at the conference—it just wasn't Osama bin Laden. No, the man everyone loved to hate was "Middle East Quarterly" Editor Martin Kramer, author of the recently published *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America.* (When Lesch mentioned Kramer's name, some in the audience actually hissed.) The MESAns have good reason to be defensive: Kramer's arguments cut to the core problem with Middle East scholarship. As Kramer describes it, for the first half of the twentieth century, there was no Middle East studies, only orientalism. Housed in stuffy Oxbridge institutes and infused with the spirit of British imperialism, the orientalists focused largely on antiquity, and a few even romantically described Arabs as heroic desert savages. Not until the early days of the cold war did American universities open institutes for Middle East Studies. Unlike orientalists, Middle East Studies professors focused on the contemporary scene, applying modern social-science methods and embracing the ideology of the cold war. Progress in the Middle East, they argued, required modernization. The late UCLA professor Malcolm Kerr described the field's conventional wisdom this way: Muslims had "little choice but to learn from the West . . . to search out the secret of its progress."

But the 1970s shook the discipline's faith in its cold war axioms. The Iranian revolution and the Lebanese civil war cast doubt on the inevitability of Westernization. These doubts were compounded by the scathing critique leveled by Columbia literature professor Edward Said in his 1978 book *Orientalism.* The American scholars, Said charged, hadn't embraced objective social science, but merely repackaged orientalism to service their government's neo-imperialist foreign policy. In part, his critique was conspiratorial: "[A]nything said about Islam by a professional scholar is within the sphere of influence of corporations and the government." And in part, it was epistemological: When scholars impose Western concepts and interpretations on Muslims and Arabs, they can't grasp the full dynamism of their subjects. *Orientalism* fit the zeitgeist perfectly. In addition to Said's timely critique of the modernization thesis, the implication of his argument—that only Muslim and Arab scholars could escape orientalism's limitations—jibed with the academy's growing obsession with identity politics.

It was, in short, a kick in the gut to the cold war liberals who had founded MESA in 1966. So instead of trying to beat Said, they joined him. As Said wrote in his 1993 book *Culture and Imperialism*, "During the 1980s, the formerly conservative Middle East Studies Association underwent an important ideological transformation. . . . What happened in the Middle East Studies Association therefore was a metropolitan story of cultural opposition to Western domination." Indeed, it's difficult to overstate *Orientalism*'s influence within the field. The historian David Gordon has described the book as "almost Koranic in its prestige."

Kramer shows how Middle East scholars took Said's argument and transposed it to political science. Terrorism and fundamentalism were suddenly racist, reductionist concepts. Instead, the new Middle East Studies consensus viewed the insurgent Islamists as avatars of "civil society" and opponents of state authoritarianism. Americans who failed to glimpse Islamism's democratic promise, argued Georgetown's John Esposito, needed "to transcend their narrow, ethnocentric conceptualization of democracy." At the San Francisco conference, a tenured professor who didn't want to be identified told me, "You don't get tenure by praising American policy." Marius Deeb, who teaches modern Middle East politics at Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies, told me, "There's a uniformity, and sometimes one gets frustrated with the taboos. For instance, one can't publicly disagree with the statement that Lebanese Hezbollah is a resistance movement." And so, Kramer argues, the discipline of Middle East Studies ignored the Al Qaeda threat. As Esposito put it in 1998: "Focusing on Osama bin Laden risk[s] catapulting one of many sources of terrorism to center stage, distorting both the diverse international sources (state and nonstate, non-Muslim and Muslim) of terrorism."

SEPTEMBER 11 MAY have dramatically altered the global order, but it hasn't altered MESA's worldview. In San Francisco, presenter after presenter referred to "so-called terrorism" or "terrorism in quotation marks." In one typical panel, the University of Arkansas's Gwenn Okruhlik defended the fundamentalist opponents of the Saudi regime as latter-day Fabians: "They're calling for redistribution of wealth and social justice. They want rule of law." When Wayne State University professor May Seikaly described Israel's 1948 victory as ushering in the *Nakba*—Arabic for "catastrophe"—her audience nodded furiously. And, at the seminar on September 11, nearly 20 scholars asked questions of the panel; only one, a professor from Baltimore Hebrew University, tentatively challenged the prevailing view. "One could argue that the September eleventh attack occurred because of the failure of the U.S. government to respond to the first World Trade Center attack. . . ." But Georgetown's Hudson summarily dismissed him: "This is an argument that one hears often in the

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media." By contrast, when an elderly professor hobbled to the microphone to say, "We ought to be reminded of our responsibility for Hiroshima and Nagasaki and understand that we're not so good," he received a round of applause. The panel's moderator, the University of Massachusetts's Mary Wilson, responded, "That hardly needs a response. I'm not sure we could add anything." And no one did.

Ironically, while anti-Americanism reigned at the MESA conference, it was suffering a serious blow in the Muslim world itself—as Afghans thanked the United States for helping liberate them from the Taliban. Which made me wonder whether MESA, which has tried so hard to authentically understand Islamic and Arab points of view, may be behind the times once again. At a Starbucks across from the conference headquarters at the Hyatt, I eavesdropped on a conversation between two attendees, a Jordanian man and an American woman. They were old friends, catching up on one another's lives since last year's MESA meeting. The woman, with closely cropped hair and faded jeans, spoke of her new tome on women in Islam. "It occurs to me that jihad might be a useful rhetorical strategy," she told her friend. "Women can use the excuse of holy war to justify a greater role in the public sphere." After a while, the conversation made the inevitable loop back to the subject of the moment. The Jordanian spoke about the crisis in Islam: "I hate all this talk about how Islam isn't to blame. We know the truth." The comment didn't quite register with his friend. "Yeah, that's right," she said, "The media talks about blameless Islam, but turns around and calls attention to 'Islamic terrorism'"—drawing the quotation marks in the air. The Jordanian didn't correct his friend's misinterpretation, nor allow it to interrupt his train of thought: "Perhaps this will be a mixed blessing," he continued. "Some good will come. My dream: We recognize our folly and adopt Jeffersonian liberalism." The women chuckled: "Do you really want it?" ■

Kabul Dispatch

Bad Memory

By ELIZABETH RUBIN

AT A NORTHERN ALLIANCE checkpoint just north of Kabul, I bumped into Allah Mohammad and his rowdy soldiers, whom I'd last seen manning the front lines around the bombed-out cinema near the Bagram airport shortly before the attack on the capital. On one side of the road was a red container. Inside, in front of a stack of Dubai sacks of sugar, sat a Taliban prisoner in a baby-blue *salwar kameez*, the ubiquitous traditional regional dress, with his arms wrapped around his legs. On the other side of the road, another young prisoner was cowering inside a shaggy lean-to rigged up out of old tarp, coats, and tree branches. Allah Mohammad and his soldiers were charged up from their victory, bragging about how many foreign terrorists they'd each killed last week. They were eager to show off their prisoners, and aggressively hauled one of the Taliban men out into the road, as if they were going to beat or kill him for sport.

"Don't. Don't. Don't hit him. Stop," an American journalist shouted. "Doesn't Islam say you're supposed to treat prisoners well?"

Of course, said one of the soldiers. "But last year when we had the front lines in this place and we were retreating to Panjshir they killed fifty of our soldiers.... They're brutal with us."

At which point my American colleague's driver shouted, "Beat them until they tell us where their weapons are."

"Don't say that. Tell him to stay out of it," my colleague said to one of the translators.

Then my driver squatted down next to the prisoner and said, "Fuck off, Osama. Osama's the husband of your mother. I hate you. Why did you bring Pakistan and the Arabs here to destroy our country? You killed our great Ahmed Shah Massoud. If I'd captured you, I would have killed you. But now we're telling these soldiers not to hit you because we are kind."

Farid, a clean-shaven, blue-eyed, Northern Alliance soldier, told us that it was true—Islam does say to treat prisoners-of-war well. And my driver, despite his outburst, told a story about Ahmed Shah Massoud wrapping his coat around a Russian soldier whom he'd just taken prisoner on a freezing mountainside. "I didn't want to beat him," said Farid about one of the two prisoners. "I was kind and generous with him. I brought him tea and bread. But he kept lying to us, and until I hit him four times he wouldn't admit he had weapons."

My American colleague said, "I know they beat you, but it has to end somewhere."

Allah Mohammad, the 26-year-old commander who'd lost ten relatives in the past three months, put his arm around the terrified Taliban prisoner and said, "Don't worry. Nothing's going to happen. Don't worry."

As he led him back to the tarp, a bright, white Land Cruiser slowed to pass through the checkpoint. In the front passenger's seat, a clean-shaven guy with a buzz cut suddenly pulled a green-and-white Afghan scarf up over his face. And the three similar-looking men in the back seat all turned their heads away from us in unison. It was a dead giveaway, and we all started to laugh, realizing that these tough American special forces were trying to hide their identities. The car began to accelerate away, and my American colleague cried out, "Hey man, you guys did a great job." And then he muttered, "Shit, I should have told them to go kick more Taliban ass."

It was a visceral moment, born of the Al Qaeda attacks on the United States and the evidence of sinister intent we'd been finding all week in the abandoned houses of the Arabs and Pakistanis who'd occupied Kabul. Chemical weapons formulas, documents about how to destroy cities and big buildings, advertising for flight-training schools. Nevertheless, the moment died quickly and we turned back to Allah Mohammad and the prisoners to ask them about the dead Arabs and Pakistanis we'd just seen in a vineyard and in the

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gardens of Qala-i-Gulai, up the road toward Bagram. Did they execute them? Were they killed in fighting?

We had seen one young, smooth-skinned Pakistani with a red bullet hole between his eyes. Another was missing the left side of his forehead and skull. Another had a black turban stuffed atop his green jacket where his missing head should have been. Further down the road, we had traced the tire tracks of a truck out into the desert plain. More than a dozen cartridges from Kalashnikovs lay near the end of the tracks. Some ten feet away lay an unraveled black turban, red embroidered skullcaps from Kandahar, and four longhaired Punjabis in white pants. A dog was nosing around the bodies, which had been there long enough that dogs had eaten away at one of their legs and stomach. My driver said to me "Good, no? They killed how many people in your city?" I stared at their bare feet. There was just one pair of boots left. Probably, I thought, they didn't fit any of the soldiers who'd taken part in the killing. Then I noticed that the boots were torn, and lying next to the only guy with bullet holes in his feet.

EACH DAY SINCE the Taliban fled and the Northern Alliance arrived, another sign of freedom and resurrection sprouts in Kabul. Last week it was the children flying their kites. This week TV Kabul aired its first program since the Taliban banned television five years ago. Incredibly, the announcer was a young woman with a floral scarf loosely draped around her hair, her face in plain view. Afghan musicians from every ethnic group sang on air. Pictures of Afghan national heroes from past centuries were spliced in over footage of the country's mountains and rivers. A few days ago the Kabul cinema opened its doors to cheering audiences. And in the streets, women are testing the waters, wearing their burqas at half-mast, flipped back, revealing their faces.

That's the good news. The bad news is what the Islamic militants left behind. For days, journalists have been ransacking homes in the affluent Kabul neighborhoods they had taken over, discovering that, mainly, these people were spending their waking moments plotting how to kill as many civilians as possible. In a guest house that was part of the Taliban defense ministry, the door to the dining room was painted with a three-petaled pink flower with green leaves, and a welcome sign. Inside, beneath the Arabic title "MUSLIM COUNTRIES OCCUPIED BY THE INFIDEL," was a brightly painted map of the Arabian Peninsula with American flags indicating U.S. military bases. Amid grenades, helmets, and heavy machine-gun parts were stacked 32-kilogram Milans—powerful and hard-to-obtain NATO-issued anti-tank missiles.

Upstairs in a room marked "Entry Not Permitted" were piles of photocopied military textbooks, and pages and pages of handwritten notes and letters all pertaining to international jihad. One notebook page read, "Before and after precautions for using chemical warfare, biological warfare and nuclear warfare." Another handwritten note was titled: "Classification of explosions: Liquid explosives and formula C3H5(ONO2)3. These kinds of explosives are very sensitive and strong. Plastic explosives (C1-C3)—which are all different kinds of plastic explosives. Hard explosives RDX-TNT. Gas Explosives CH8(CNO2)." We found a report, handwritten on typing paper, of "Foreign troops in Arabian Countries." Outlined were the numbers and locations of American, British, Israeli, and French soldiers, jets, helicopters, military bases, and aircraft carriers, all over the Middle East.

We found a photocopied, handwritten textbook with titles like, "How to create chaos in a building." "The way to create confusion is for example to burn the elevators, destroy the water supply, block the entrance and exits," it instructed. And, "All cities are central bases of the countries; because of that taking control of cities is important."

There was a Microsoft warrantee from a flight-simulator program, pages ripped out of a flying magazine listing flight schools in Florida and Texas, and a crop-dusting flight school in Oklahoma. There were forged visas, an Iraqi passport, a Bosnian passport, the handwritten address of a woman living in Italy. An Italian journalist called her, and she said that yes, she was married to a Moroccan who disappeared over the summer and who turns out to be one of the top 50 most-wanted terrorists by the United States.

There were more personal documents, too, written by holy warriors who'd come from all over the world to join the international jihad and win eventual martyrdom. One is from an unnamed man writing his last will on tiny slips of paper—four meters away, he says, from Sheikh Osama (presumably bin Laden); his first deputy, Sheikh Mohammed Atef; and his second deputy, the infamous operations man from Egypt, Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri. "I am passing my life with these people who are like lions against infidels," he writes. "I pray to Allah to give me martyrdom and I hope that I won't be far from these men in this world and the next." To his father he writes, "You really raised your son to be brave, not a coward. Dear mother I really tired you and my father in my life and hope you will forgive me.... And I hope that I can, *inshallah*, help you from paradise."

At one point, the thin, serious Afghan professor of Arabic, who was sifting through and translating these documents, paused sadly, ashamed to see how these men were defacing the name of Islam. "Islam condemns fundamentalism," he said, "and I just want to thank the United States for giving us military and civilian help, and to say we don't want the United States to leave us. We are so close to being victors and getting rid of these terrorists."

I THOUGHT ABOUT the little diary beginning in August 2000 that I'd found in the trenches around Qala-i-Gulai, where so many of these Pakistanis and Arabs were killed. It was written by Osman Shakil of Pakistan, clearly a boy lost in a war he didn't understand, but that had filled his life with meaning. On October 21, 2001, from the Bagram front he wrote: "Tonight at 11:30 p.m. American planes struck our position ... but nobody here was martyred or injured. It went on until 2 a.m. and during the strike on Kabul 40 of our friends were martyred and a lot injured. Fortunately our morale is still very high."

Then on November 4, 2001, he wrote: "Injury, injury don't show your injury to the people because in the world there's no one to put medicine on your wounds. Rather, they'll try to injure you even more.... If you want to be successful in your life you must forget your sadness. You must bury your sadness

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inside your body." A few days later he wrote that the American strikes continued all night, and when the Northern Alliance captured Mazar-e-Sharif, one of his friends was martyred and 25 were captured. The last entry read: "I am not laughing now because I don't have lips. This crime to my heart is not a simple thing. And so, I cannot laugh. Some unfaithful person has broken my heart. Oh people, don't punish my heart. Oh people, don't commit your crimes against my heart. If you don't believe me please take my heart out and look at it. There upon you'll see written the words: Unfaithful Beloved."

Most of the Pakistanis and Arabs fighting here didn't surrender, knowing there'd be little mercy from the Northern Alliance. Yet what did we expect? A man who worked with the Taliban here in Kabul told me today how the Arabs decapitated Tajik prisoners from the front lines, or gouged out their eyes because they were "infidels." And he explained how they forced the Afghan Taliban to burn down the Tajik villages between Kabul and Bagram, like Qala-i-Gulai, so the local Taliban could never defect back.

Twice while he was telling me these things, a friend of his knocked on the door to offer material he said he'd stolen from Al Qaeda. If he wasn't lying, he had invaluable videos, one of a plane taking off from Boston's Logan Airport before it missiled into the World Trade Center—potentially vital proof linking Al Qaeda to the attack. He had others, but wanted exorbitant amounts of money. My host was mildly embarrassed, apologized, and said, "This is how we're used to making our living. We would sell information to the Northern Alliance about the Taliban and the Arabs, and now people want to sell it to you. We're too poor in this country, we'll sell anything. Pakistan wanted bones, old copper, old steel, roots of almond trees, so our people stripped away at our motherland—cutting down electrical and phone wires, digging up bodies out of graves, demolishing buildings, even chopping down the almond trees. Selling off our future to our Pakistani enemies." Now they're taking it back. ■

Why this recession will be worse.

Wretched Excess

By NOAM SCHEIBER

AFTER ONE OF the best ten-year runs in economic history, the torrent of bad news flooding Alan Greenspan's office this January had to be jarring. The country had just seen its worst quarter of economic growth since 1995, and manufacturing activity had fallen to its lowest level since 1991. Spending by businesses on new plants and equipment had dropped for the first time in a decade. And the stock markets' decline, already nine months old, showed no signs of abating. So Greenspan lowered interest rates, over and over again. By mid-August, the venerable Fed chairman had cut the target federal funds rate, the key short-term interest rate, by an astonishing three points—the fastest rate reduction in almost 20 years.

Greenspan's actions weren't controversial. Cutting interest rates—that is, using "monetary policy"—is the anti-recession weapon of choice across the economics profession. Lower interest rates make it cheaper to borrow money, which encourages consumers to buy big-ticket items—like appliances, cars, and homes—and companies to invest more heavily in new equipment. Since recessions usually occur because consumers have stopped spending, leaving businesses with excess inventory and forcing them to scale back production, cutting interest rates is often the perfect antidote.

Indeed, with a little help from fiscal policy—that is, using tax cuts or government spending to put extra money in the hands of consumers and businesses—the Federal Reserve has gotten pretty good at managing recessions this way. As Northwestern University economist Robert Gordon has pointed out, recessions between 1846 and 1945 were two-thirds as long as their corresponding expansions. Between 1945 and 1982, recessions were only one-fourth as long. (America's most recent recession, in 1991, fits this pattern as well.) So despite the stream of bad economic news, economists were confident that Greenspan's rate cuts would work their magic soon enough. "We're in that awkward period where ... people are losing faith," Mickey Levy, the chief economist at Bank of America told the *Los Angeles Times* in August. "They say, 'Monetary policy doesn't work.' But guess what? It always does."

Even the near economic shutdown that followed September 11 hasn't shaken this conviction. After two additional half-point rate cuts, Glenn Hubbard, chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, insisted that "[t]he dynamics of the recovery are likely to be fairly similar to what we've seen before. I have no reason to believe [monetary] policy won't be very effective." According to a recent survey by Blue Chip Economic Indicators, most economists agree. The majority of those surveyed predicted a recovery sometime early next year, with GDP growing at a 1.4 percent annual rate in the first quarter and a 2.9 percent rate in the second. By mid-summer the economy should be back in overdrive.

If this recession is like every other American recession since World War II, that optimism is fully merited. The problem is that there's mounting evidence it's not. This time around, it wasn't a change in consumer spending that brought the economy to a standstill; it was largely a change in *business* spending. As anyone who has picked up a finan-

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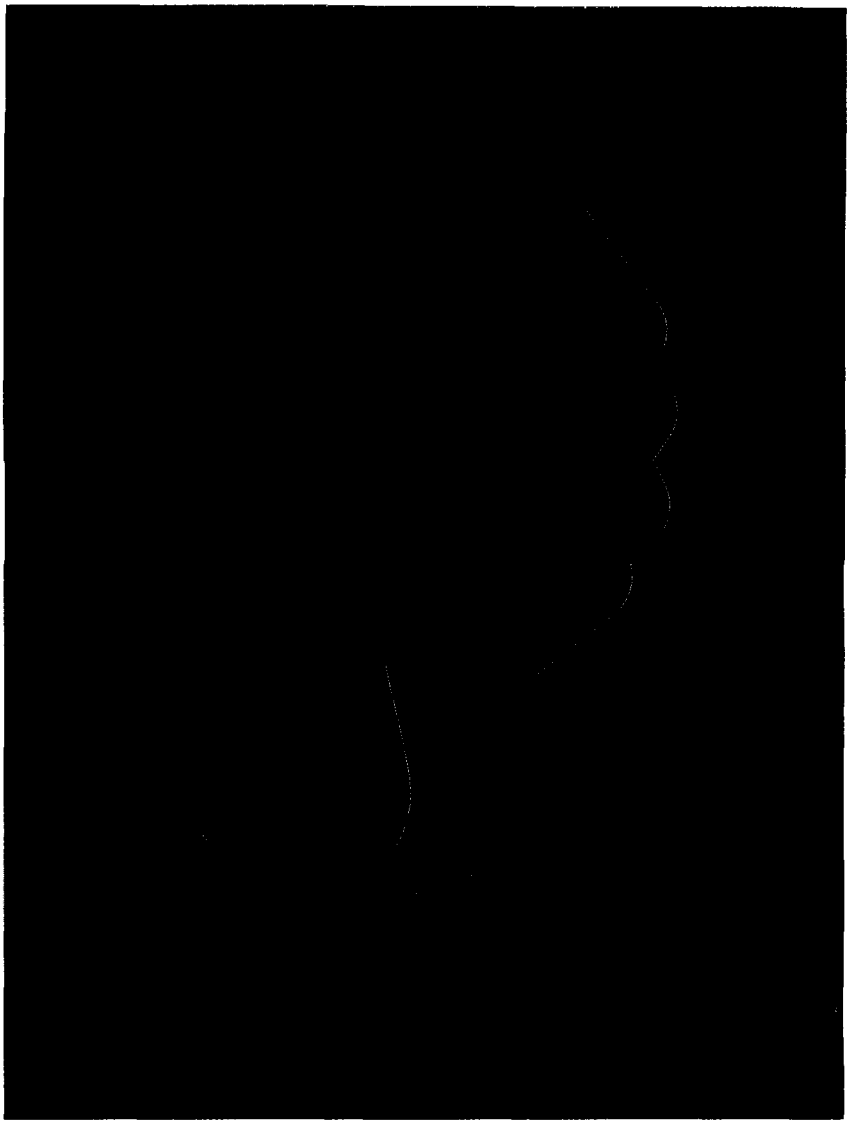
cial page in the last year knows, the story of the 1990s is that company after company bet heavily that consumers would purchase huge amounts of goods and services in the future, particularly in areas related to information technology (IT). Businesses raised vast amounts of capital, bought and sold equipment at a frenzied pace, and dramatically increased their productive capacity—only to discover that every other business was doing the same, thus increasing the nation's overall productive capacity far beyond what consumers could realistically support. When that became apparent, businesses literally stopped investing in new equipment, and the economy—whose growth in the late '90s had been driven in part by a surge in investment—suddenly and dramatically faltered.

Cutting interest rates in the middle of this type of economic slowdown, as Greenspan did this year, won't help much. As long as companies feel they already have too much equipment, no amount of interest rate cutting will induce them to buy more. And cutting rates before such a slowdown begins in hopes of staving it off—as Greenspan did in 1998—may even be counterproductive. Low interest rates at the tail end of a long boom can encourage businesses to binge on new equipment when they already have too much. Then, when the optimism finally fades, companies must shed even more productive capacity. Some companies retire equipment; others merge or go out of business. Either way, the adjustment is more painful than it would otherwise have been.



In other words, economists' current faith in monetary policy has a lot to do with the kinds of recessions we've seen in the past, and little to do with the recession we're in now. By ignoring the difference, they're not only failing to solve the problem, they may actually have made it worse.

As economists describe it, the standard, postwar business cycle begins with an expansion, when demand picks up after the previous recession. Before long, this modest growth evolves into an outright boom, in which the economy begins expanding faster than its long-term growth rate and very near its overall capacity to produce goods and services. Next is what economists refer to as the "crunch" period, during which time the onset of inflation—as consumers demand more goods and services than can be produced—provokes the Fed to raise interest rates. These higher interest rates cause consumers to scale back big-ticket purchases and, usually not long after, businesses cut back production to compensate. This stamps out inflation, but triggers a recession, as layoffs and bankruptcies ensue. The final phase, "reliquefication," describes the financial restructuring that occurs when businesses and consumers pay off the debts they accumulated during the boom period, and businesses liquidate the inventories that had piled up along the way. Some time after that happens, the assumption goes, consumers (and then businesses) start spending, and the cycle begins all over again.

Given that framework, it's easy to see how public policy can speed the recovery along: When demand slows down, you simply cut interest rates to get consumers spending again. But suppose you faced a different sort of recession. Suppose that, instead of a credit crunch, in which rising interest rates caused consumers to cut back, businesses were the ones that stopped spending first, because they realized all the demand they had been anticipating wasn't going to materialize for years (if ever), even though they already had the capacity in place—both in terms of equipment and employees—to accommodate it today. At that point, no amount of interest rate reductions would prompt more spending. You'd just have to ride out the storm.

Unfortunately, that's the situation we seem to be in. Between October 2000 and March 2001, corporate profits shrunk at an annual rate of 20 percent, as the demand for goods and services fell vastly short of expectations. Facing declining profits, businesses simply stopped spending: Investment in capital equipment froze in the first quarter of

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2001, having increased by over 21 percent in the same quarter the year before. Much of the drop-off was driven by an astounding 12.8 percent decline in spending on information technology, which at the time accounted for about half of all capital investment. The impact on an economy propelled by investment in information technology was not hard to discern. From July 1999 to June 2000, IT spending had increased 16.6 percent, and the economy as a whole had grown at a rate of 5.1 percent. Over the following year, IT spending fell by 6.5 percent and GDP growth weighed in at a mere 1.3 percent.

And capital spending still hasn't hit bottom. Until now, software had been the lone safe haven amid the information technology collapse. While spending on hardware dropped at an annual rate of 31 percent in the first half of this year, software fell just 5 percent. Indeed, software remains one of the few sectors that venture capitalists are still funding. But there's reason to suspect we're on the verge of a software collapse as well. As Stephen Roach, chief economist for Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, points out, companies spent $1.40 on software for every dollar they spent on hardware between 1990 and 1997. That figure rose to $1.70 between 1998 and 2000, largely due to the rise of Internet-related business. But because hardware spending has been falling at a much faster rate than software spending, the ratio had risen to $2.09 by the middle of this year. There's no way that kind of ratio can be sustained: Businesses only need so much software to run a fixed amount of hardware.

It gets worse. At its peak in 2000, capital spending accounted for only 14 percent of corporate costs, meaning there was only so much cost-saving that restraining investment could yield. Much more daunting was the 70 percent of corporate costs accounted for by labor. In fact, as Roach has noted, the glut of capital equipment that firms accumulated in the late '90s was surpassed only by the glut of personnel they hired, again in anticipation of demand that was still years away. Much of that personnel glut came in the form of managers. By 2000 the size of the nation's managerial class had risen to nearly 20 million, up more than 20 percent since 1994. Which meant that, to really cut costs, companies would have to cut high-paying jobs. And, over the last few months, they've done exactly that. From October 2000 to February 2001, managers accounted for less than 2 percent of the 400,000 Americans who lost their jobs. Between March and June, they accounted for a whopping 64 percent of 486,000. And though the subsequent spike in layoffs is typically blamed on the terrorist attacks, its impetus clearly predates September 11. In fact, according to *The New York Times*, many firms actually delayed and even moderated their layoffs in the weeks following the attacks for fear of appearing callous.

BUT JUST BECAUSE this recession is different from the ones we've seen in the recent past doesn't mean it's unprecedented. There is a model to explain it, and it comes from the early-twentieth-century economist, Joseph Schumpeter. In his 1939 classic, *Business Cycles*, Schumpeter argued that economic cycles are essentially driven by the economy's response to innovation. His idea goes something like this: When some lucky entrepreneur invents a new technology, he borrows money, starts a firm, and begins to rack up huge profits. Soon, other entrepreneurs adopt more or less the same technology and begin making huge profits of their own.

The problem is that great innovations tend to create a surge of optimism, causing what Schumpeter referred to as a "secondary wave." That is, not only do firms in the innovating industry invest great sums, but other firms begin to speculate, figuring they, too, can cash in on the new technology. To borrow Schumpeter's example, a new factory means more business for the local grocer, which means more business for the wholesaler, which means more business for the manufacturer, who, in turn, ramps up production. Unfortunately, people get carried away when making these adjustments, as do the interests that finance them. As Schumpeter put it, "many people will act on the assumption that the rates of change they observe will continue indefinitely, and enter into transactions which will result in losses as soon as facts fail to verify that assumption."

Because Schumpeter understood growth as a function of innovation, he understood recessions as inevitable periods of adaptation: An economy assimilating a new innovation accumulates deadweight that must be purged—firms made obsolete, firms that adapt slowly or poorly, and firms dependent on firms in either of these categories. The speculative phase Schumpeter identified exacerbates the problem by creating more deadweight. As a result, more people have to bear more pain—in the form of bankruptcy and job losses—for a longer period of time.

SCHUMPETER MADE TECHNOLOGICAL innovation the central feature of his model because, at the time he was writing, it was the most important force propelling the economy. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, the growth of railroads drove the nation's westward expansion. Around the turn of the century, electricity and automobiles were revolutionizing the industrial world.

Moreover, each boom period seemed to be followed by an equally violent bust. Take the post-Civil War railroad boom. As optimism surrounding the railroad expansion grew, banks lent to companies against bonds that were later sold to the public, and speculation in railroad stocks increased dramatically. That optimism reached a fever pitch in 1869, with the completion of a transcontinental route at Promontory Point, Utah. As one contemporary observer put it, "They built [rail]roads everywhere, apparently in perfect confidence that the country would so develop as to support all the [rail]roads that could be built."

And then, in Schumpeter's words, "railroad construction had temporarily exhausted possibilities." The more than 50,000 miles of track laid in the United States roughly equaled the amount that existed in all of Western Europe, whose population was more than three times the size. Which makes it hardly surprising that the failure of the once-powerful Northern Pacific Railroad could trigger a market crash in 1873. Stock prices and land values imploded (the latter having risen wildly in areas opened up by rail expansion),

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and 40 percent of railway bonds became worthless over the next few years. Annual construction of track slowed from 7,500 miles just before the crash to 2,500 miles afterward. And the ripple effects produced a depression whose magnitude would not be replicated until the 1930s. The reason? As Schumpeter put it, "[r]ailroad construction ... had so revolutionized the economic system that liquidation, absorption, adaptation ... was an unusually long and painful affair."

FAST-FORWARD 125 YEARS and the story is eerily similar. In the late 1990s fiber optic cable seemed to hold the same limitless possibilities that rails had in the 1860s. Amid a dramatic increase in Internet use, demand for "bandwidth" (i.e., capacity for handling communications traffic) literally skyrocketed. The main reason was that the vast majority of existing infrastructure had been made from copper wire, meaning that signals had to be transmitted electronically—not the most efficient process, as anyone who has ever tried to connect to the Internet using a regular phone line can tell you. The beauty of fiber optics, on the other hand, was that they transmitted signals as light. That meant each signal encountered less resistance en route to its destination and arrived much more quickly. Meanwhile, because photons are much lighter than electrons, each optic cable could haul millions of times more traffic than its copper counterpart. In light of that advance, one widely reported estimate predicted that telecommunications companies would spend more than $1 trillion upgrading their networks over the next 20 years.

Needless to say, the possibilities weren't lost on American businessmen. In June 1998 a fledgling company named Global Crossing had laid a single, 5,000-mile fiber optic cable. Two years later it had literally crossed the globe, the size of its network soaring to over 100,000 miles. During the same period, an army of "new economy" entrepreneurs were doing the same. At last count, a rival company called PSINet had assembled a million-mile network. Another rival, Qwest, had laid more than 190,000 miles of fiber. In all, more than 40 million miles of optical fiber were laid—enough to send an e-mail to Mars and still have cable left over. And, ironically, much of it was laid along existing rail lines.

Unfortunately, as with railroads in the 1860s, no one has figured out what to do with all that cable just yet. Even under the wildly optimistic, if popular, assumption that Internet traffic was doubling every few months, it would have taken years for demand to warrant the amount of cable actually installed. A report by Merrill Lynch this summer revealed that just 2.6 percent of all the fiber in the ground was being used. The vast majority of it isn't even operational (or "lit," as they say in the industry). As a result, wholesale bandwidth prices (i.e., the fees phone companies and Internet service providers pay to send information across optical networks) plummeted by around 60 percent last year. And with it, the price of fiber optic companies' stocks. Today a share of Global Crossing, once valued at over $73, fetches a meager $1.58.

Given the parallels between today and the booms of the nineteenth century, why are economists so confident this recession will turn out like the relatively painless downturns of recent decades—recessions amenable to swift interest rate cuts by the Fed?

The answer has a lot to do with the evolution of the discipline over the last half-century. For all practical purposes, macroeconomics didn't exist as a distinct field prior to the Great Depression. The economy was seen as the sum of its individual markets, which meant no special tool was needed for analyzing it as a whole. Just as individual markets were self-correcting, the thinking went, so was the entire economy.

The Depression, of course, changed that view. A collapse in the nation's money supply triggered a severe deflation, meaning that each dollar was worth progressively more as time went by. (There is some debate as to what caused this collapse, with some economists citing a string of bank failures and others pointing to mistakes by the Fed.) With dollars worth more the longer people held them, there was no incentive to spend them sooner rather than later. Demand for goods and services plummeted, destroying millions of jobs in the process. Meanwhile, with the value of each dollar rising, it became progressively more expensive for employers to pay their employees the same number of dollars. Before long, the economy fell into a vicious cycle, as rising unemployment squeezed demand, and lower demand increased unemployment.

It soon became apparent that the problem wasn't going to fix itself. Hence the need for a radical rethinking of the way we managed the economy. The Keynesian revolution, and the subsequent monetarist counterrevolution, accomplished just that—with Keynesians (notably Keynes himself) arguing that government must spend money to prop up demand in a recession, and a few decades later, monetarists arguing that the government must ensure a stable money supply. As a practical matter, there is an obvious complementarity between the two positions: Government spending can help stimulate demand, while stabilizing the money supply arrests deflation. And today macroeconomics is characterized by a synthesis of those two components.

But something interesting happened as modern macroeconomics was being born. First, as Northwestern's Gordon has noted, in the transition to the postwar era, economists switched their focus from explaining business cycles as self-contained phenomena (as Schumpeter had) to simply explaining how various "shocks" to the economy—a rise in interest rates, a rise in oil prices—were propagated. Second, in the transition from Keynesianism to monetarism, the focus shifted again. The new goal was to define the relationship between the money supply and economic growth, and calibrate the economy accordingly. With that growing preoccupation, it's no surprise that, by the late 1960s, professional economists had reached a consensus about the power of monetary policy—that it could, for example, cure a recession regardless of its cause. By the late 1970s that confidence had pervaded Washington as well.

As we're now learning, that confidence wasn't entirely justified. But it's not just that monetary policy may prove ineffectual for the kind of recession we face today. After all, with the sort of capacity glut we're now facing, just about every policy response—tax cuts, spending increases, you

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name it—would prove ineffectual. The real trouble is that our faith in monetary policy may have actually made this recession *worse*. To see why, you have to return again to the Great Depression, whose lasting contribution to contemporary macroeconomics was the idea that severe recessions and depressions are almost always the result of policy mistakes.

According to the current consensus, the glaring policy mistake of the 1930s was a failure to stabilize the money supply to offset deflation. As a result, economists grew convinced that the money supply must be increased any time there's a serious negative shock to the economy. (The process is known as "increasing liquidity" and can be accomplished by buying up Treasury bonds, which the Fed does when it lowers interest rates.) For the most part, that has been a pretty successful approach. In the wake of the stock market crash of October 1987, for example, the country very likely avoided a financial crisis because Alan Greenspan had learned exactly that lesson.

But as our faith in monetary policy (and one particular monetary policymaker named Greenspan) grew, the determination to respond to crises slowly evolved into an attempt to anticipate, and head off, crises before they ever appeared—what financial observer Jim Grant derides as "anticipatory monetary policy." In 1997 concern about financial markets in Southeast Asia deterred Greenspan from raising interest rates despite evidence of excess liquidity in the financial system. Then, in late September 1998, Greenspan dropped the federal funds rate by a quarter-point amid continuing financial woes in Southeast Asia, a Russian debt default, and the meltdown of the high-powered—and highly leveraged—Long-Term Capital Management hedge fund. That kind of temporary move was arguably necessary to prevent a global financial crisis. The problem was that it turned out not to be temporary at all. Greenspan lowered interest rates by a quarter-point twice more over the subsequent two months, cuts he didn't begin to reverse until the following summer for fear of leaving the economy vulnerable.

The Fed finally raised interest rates back to their September 1998 levels only in November of 1999, at which point many felt that still further hikes were necessary. But fear of Y2K-related problems—problems for which he had little concrete evidence and which subsequently proved nonexistent—caused Greenspan to defer these additional hikes until February. As with the decision to keep interest rates low earlier in the year, the move was purely prophylactic.

WHY WAS GREENSPAN SO anxious? For one thing, he was still smarting from what former Fed Vice Chairman Alan Blinder has called the "only blemish on [his] record"—the failure to head off the 1991 recession that helped usher President George H.W. Bush from office. As one Wall Street economist put it earlier this year, "Alan Greenspan was blamed for one Bush recession. He doesn't want to be blamed for another." In addition, Greenspan had become a true believer in the power of information technology to alter the fundamental laws of economics—in particular the idea that technology had permanently increased productivity and, therefore, the rate at which the economy could grow without sparking inflation. In such a context, monetary policy seemed to hold out the promise of a painless business cycle—one in which no one ever lost his job. Greenspan practically said as much. At a Senate Budget Committee hearing in January, he explained that the difference between a mere slowing of growth and an actual recession (i.e., a period in which the economy contracts) was typically how consumers responded—the implication being that the Fed could prop up consumer confidence and thereby keep the economy growing indefinitely.

And yet, as we're discovering today, the old business cycle still exists: When the combination of innovation and optimism produces vast excesses, one way or another we have to sit tight until those excesses are wrung out. Moreover, as a purely logical proposition, anything we do to add to the excess will make the subsequent wringing-out more painful.

WHICH, IT SEEMS, is precisely what Greenspan did with his preemptive strikes against recession in the late 1990s. By any objective measure, the excess in the economy was already great in 1998. Between 1994 and 1998, capacity in three top technology sectors—computers, communications equipment, and semiconductors—increased more than 400 percent. Or, to take an old-economy example, in 1995 the nation had just under 27,000 indoor movie screens. By 1998 that number had risen to over 33,000, even though admissions hadn't risen nearly as quickly.

By trying to postpone the inevitable sorting-out period, Greenspan ended up vastly increasing those excesses: Capacity in the three tech sectors more than doubled between 1998 and 2000; the movie industry added 2,200 more screens even as admissions fell 4 percent. It's not hard to see why. First, money injected into the financial system inevitably gets used. When Greenspan's fear about financial crisis proved overblown, that use turned out to be investments that "were not justified by fundamentals, and not socially or privately productive," according to Ohio State University economist Steve Cecchetti. But, more generally, when Wall Street concludes that the Fed is committed to bailing it out, investors and businesses behave more recklessly than they otherwise might.

Now that the recession is underway, cutting interest rates will prevent it from being worse than necessary. While monetary policy isn't going get businesses investing in new equipment any time soon, and it won't do much to save firms that never should have existed in the first place, it can prevent sound firms from going under by helping them pay off debts. Similarly, it can help consumers to refinance mortgages and makers of big-ticket items like cars to offer cut-rate financing. Government spending might also help ease the blow—perhaps by extending health insurance to those who lost it with their jobs. But the hard truth is that we can't avoid this recession, and there's not a lot we can do to make it shorter. The people who make American economic policy may be about to learn that lesson. It's just too bad they couldn't have learned it sooner. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Worth Hoping About

WITH THREE FILMS, Gianni Amelio put himself in the front rank of contemporary directors. Born in 1945 in southern Italy (his work shows a special empathy for southern Italians and Sicilians), he joined RAI, the national television network, in 1970. Soon he won praise for his documentaries and moved into feature films. His third feature, *Open Doors* (1990), adapted from a Leonardo Sciascia novel about a judge and justice, announced the arrival of a socially responsive artist who combined full-bodied compassion with refinement of touch. Two years later, *Stolen Children*, about a young Milanese policeman who escorts two children of a delinquent mother back to Sicily, gave full play to Amelio's taciturn but glowing empathy. And two years later came *Lamerica*, about an Italian swindler in Albania and a supposed voyage to the United States, a work that is a candidate for permanence in the world's film treasury.

These three films, especially the latter two, established Amelio as a valuable scarcity: a humanist director more concerned with comprehension than with exposé, intent on making complex art without egotistical display. He was a reminder of the Bertrand Tavernier who made *The Clockmaker* and *The Judge and the Assassin*, a director who seemed thankful, rather than boastful, that he had a talent to put at the service of his perceptions.

Now arrives Amelio's **The Way We Laughed** (New Yorker)—with its American premiere at the Film Forum in New York—which won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival last year. The title comes from a page in an Italian weekly that printed old jokes sent in by readers, reminders of what had been thought funny in previous years. For Amelio, the title is ironic: the period is 1958–1964, but what is remembered is not funny.

The first minute is an assurance that Amelio is still Amelio. We are in the railroad station in Turin, with passengers disembarking. In the foreground a youth, apparently waiting for someone, anxiously slides out of sight behind a pillar. The sky is gray, the light is misty. We learn from the dialogue that most of these new arrivals are Sicilian. Simply, swiftly, Amelio has told us two things: these southerners, from an island that they consider the very residence of the sun, have arrived in a different climate; and someone who is waiting for someone is wary of the encounter. Both our visual and our narrative appetites are quickened.

The quality of what we see never wavers. Throughout, the superb cinematographer Luca Bigazzi (who did *Lamerica*) creates the damp and chilly north almost without remission, yet without blatancy, as if the Sicilians are getting used to it because the work they need is here. Part of the conflict in the film is thus presented without comment: all the Sicilians in the story recognize and treat one another as compatriots in an Italy that is not theirs.

That youth back in the station is Pietro, a Sicilian who has been a student in Turin and who is waiting for Giovanni, his older brother. Pietro is shy about meeting Giovanni for temperamental reasons that become clear. Giovanni is stronger, rougher—and illiterate—but absolutely devoted to Pietro. Amelio's screenplay presents their not-quite-parallel lives through the next six years, with job and personal vicissitudes, set in a cinematic texture that is much more than surface realism.

A few of the story touches seem included dutifully, such as an encounter with a Communist parade in a film that is otherwise apolitical: but most of them are germane, like the brothers' visit to a brothel and its unforeseen homely consequences. By and large, the brothers are truly a pair, though they live quite differently. Giovanni is struggling steadily with the world of bread; Pietro, almost resentfully loving and grateful, struggles fitfully for education.

Then comes a sadness—for us, not the brothers. About halfway through this two-hour film, Amelio's screenplay slides from organism into arrangement. Things happen that have no basis in what we have seen, such as Giovanni's rise to relative comfort (and his first appearance in a white shirt). Pietro disappears for a year—how he lives is not mentioned—and turns up well-crammed to pass a teachers' exam. A murder occurs, unexplained to us, and the responsibility for it is juggled. Through the second half of the film, we are uncomfortably aware that Amelio is trying to evolve a tale, à la Pratolini or Vittorini, about time's transmutations through the battle to endure, but he has not hidden the seams, and sometimes he plays overtly for tears. (There is an especially regrettable Movieland use of the French song "*La Mer*.") The narrative contrivances are all the more unsettling because the filmic elements never decline—the cinematography, the editing, the acting, the directing. It is as if a fine orchestra that had been playing music of a high order suddenly segues into a lesser score, the same good playing with a drop in the material.

Still, the wonderful level of the film's being as film induces us to take its lapse as no more than a lapse. The making of this picture is so sure that hope for Amelio, for his future, is almost forced on us. To my knowledge, this is the first screenplay that he has written alone, and it seems clear that he needs collaborators such as those he has had in the past, to help his exceptional talent to flourish further.

Additional encouragements for us: Amelio has discovered a sixteen-year-old named Francesco Guiffrida, a newcomer from whom he has drawn a sensitive Pietro. And Amelio continues his collaboration with Enrico Lo Verso, who had the leading roles in *Stolen Children* and *Lamerica* and here plays Giovanni. Guiffrida's debut and Lo Verso's growth are further proof of Amelio's talent, further reason to believe in him.

The trouble with most twisty thrillers is that they are not surprising. They are so patently built to produce surprises that we just wait around to see what the surprises will be. The prize in a box of Cracker Jack is no surprise: we just dig until it comes out.

So with **Heist** (Warner Bros.), written and directed though it is by David Mamet. This author of sterling plays and exceptional screenplays (*The Verdict*, *Hoffa*) can slip into a lesser being when he both writes and directs. His first entirely self-made film, *House of Games*, was a fascinating prism of chicanery; but some of his later films, particularly *The Spanish Prisoner*, shifted gears down-

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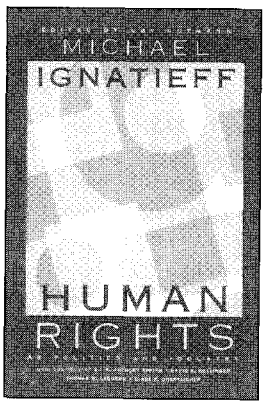

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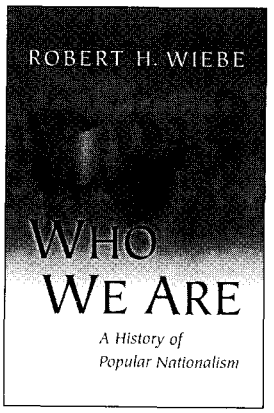

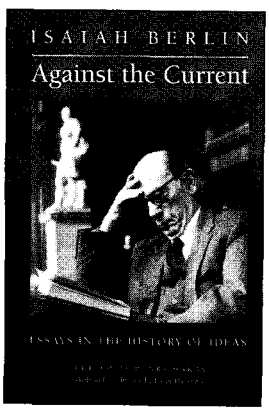

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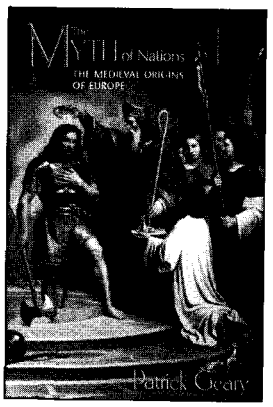

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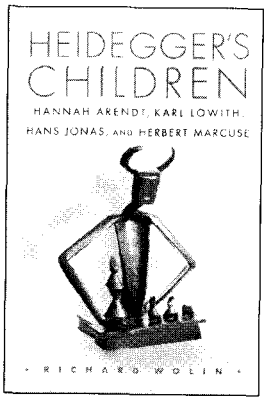

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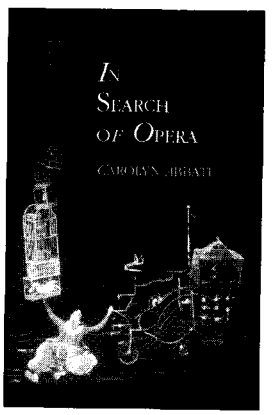

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ward in quality and intent. *Heist* even more so.

One hallmark of Mamet's plays, and of his best films, is his view of deceit as a factor in American life, as constant as food and drink. He treats deceit almost as a version of honesty. "Here I am. I live, I breathe, I deceive. What else is new?" But Mamet discarded wholeness of being and isolated the deceit in *The Spanish Prisoner*, and he does it again here. *Heist* seems to say that, because Mamet now has clout, he doesn't have to fuss with wholeness: he can just have fun making a movie like the dozens he saw as a kid.

The result has only one accomplishment: it is absolutely and completely tedious. Gene Hackman is the veteran head of a team of crooks who pull off a jewel robbery at the start with the slick dispatch of innumerable old films. Then come the troubles that we also have been conditioned to expect. Danny DeVito is Hackman's fence and makes problems. To solve them, Hackman & Co. have to execute an even bigger robbery. Can you believe that there are no hitches ahead? Or no discontents in the team?

The one near-amusement in the film, sad though it is, is the performance of Rebecca Pidgeon. In her case, it must be mentioned that she is the wife of the writer-director, because she could not possibly be in her role otherwise. Pidgeon is meant to be one more tough-cookie film noir tootsie, and she certainly could pass as such in any high-school show. It would almost be domestic intrusion to hope that we will be spared future Pidgeon flutterings, but we can certainly hope that Mamet will get back to mature, serious deceit. ■

Jennifer Homans on Dance

Dancing in the Dark

OSAMA BIN LADEN may have destroyed the World Trade Center, but he has saved American dance. I know this sounds a little grotesque; but so you would suppose, to hear the pronouncements of leading figures in the New York dance world. The response was loudest from the so-called "downtown" modern dancers clustered around Dance Theater Workshop, Danspace, and other venues supporting the work of emerging and experienced artists. On September 21, this community gathered for its annual awards ceremony, the "Bessies." It was quite an evening.

The event is certainly a worthy one. Modern dancers are notoriously underpaid and unrecognized, and the Bessies offer both acknowledgment and acclaim. Naturally, this year's event was colored by the tragedy that had taken place ten days earlier—but the news was not all bad. In the program notes, David White, the executive director of Dance Theater Workshop, offered some solace. For the better part of the past decade, he wrote, America had been "void of empathy" for the wars and the killing fields visited on "most of the world's population." But disaster had now hit in our own backyard, creating "an emotional state of emergency." Then came the kicker: in spite of the tragic losses, "downtown" art would now, finally, become "truly treacherous." "Create," he admonished, "as if your life depends on it." If danger sends artists to the coveted edge, then terrorism, White seemed to be saying, may rejuvenate the avant-garde.

The artists who took the podium to accept awards struggled to come to terms with the catastrophe. They said that they felt irrelevant, lost, uncertain. As the evening progressed, however, what began as mourning turned into a strange, almost celebratory re-living of the 1960s and the artistic movements that grew out of them. We sang "Amazing Grace" and swayed to the strains of "We Shall Overcome." We honored artists who had been instrumental in breaking with the conventions of modern dance: David Gordon and Lucinda Childs (both key figures in the Judson Church movement) and Katherine Dunham.

The Judson Church dancers insisted on process over performance; they promoted everyday movement over technical skill; they held their audiences in haughty disdain; they launched minimalism and contact improvisation; and they experimented (after Cunningham) with random movement, silence, and chance. Dunham, operating in a more anthropological key, studied Caribbean dance and ritual with scholarly seriousness and became a leader in African American dance. It was an exciting and interesting time, and the questions that these artists raised opened the floodgates to postmodernism in dance, with consequences to the present day.

The draw of the 1960s in the light of September is understandable. Here was a moment when art dovetailed with politics, in a great creative thrust that felt collective and real. Whether or not you like the dance innovations of the 1960s and 1970s, there is no doubting their moral and political engagement. But comforting as that memory may be, the 1960s are remote to life now. Since the Judson Church days, much of American dance has become bogged down in post-post crises of bi-, tri-, multi-, and trans-relativism. This may now be an uncomfortable place to be. But we cannot escape our present difficulties by skipping over the wreckage of the past twenty years and retreating into a nostalgia-tinged past. Better to admit that now, today, much of American dance is aesthetically bankrupt, dead-ended, and drowning in solipsism.

APPROPRIATELY, IT WAS the crass voice of dance-gone-identity-politics that jolted the Bessie audience out of its 1960s dream. Rennie Harris, director of the company Puremovement and a darling of the downtown dance scene, had this to say about the smoldering Twin Towers: "Hey, everything is okay; we have been purified; the planet wasn't supporting us; this is a cleansing moment." His company danced to enthusiastic cheers and wild applause—which makes it all the more disturbing that Harris's dances are violent, angry compendiums of hip-hop jargon and rap. Hard bodies hurtle through space with abusive force in a pitiless, unrelenting display of black "attitude" and street smarts. His work, like his thinking, is self-congratulatory, destructive, and unself-consciously nihilistic.

Is it too harsh to see Harris's current popularity as wreaking a fierce revenge on the 1960s? He has taken the ethics of that decade to a disquieting politically correct extreme: this is the supposed social life of the street, the pulse of African American popular culture made high art. (His latest piece, *Rome & Jewels*, is a "take" on Romeo and Juliet.) Add the self-help and ersatz Eastern spirituality of the 1980s and 1990s and you get Harris, fair and square. That he would see the

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destruction of the World Trade Center as some kind of apocalypse affirming his own spiritual worth is predictable. It is an "authentic" response from an artist so taken with his own "identity" that he no longer lives in the real world, street jive notwithstanding. Faced with the hard facts of exploding airplanes and falling buildings, Harris retreated—without a hint of shame—into the oblivion of New Age nihilism. His dances do the same. He has no political or aesthetic language to express empathy or even outrage.

The problem of language is important. Dance has been especially susceptible to postmodern jargon, with its ornate and incomprehensible assertions. Exegeses of the body as a "site" on which race, gender, imperialism, global capitalism, and all manner of "sexualities" might be "inscribed" or "enacted" have littered stages and filled academic bookshelves for a long time now. Before September 11, this nonsense was just depressing evidence of decadence and provincialism. But now the anti-rational, self-serving language of postmodernism seems more threatening, because it denies the existence of objective facts (those planes?) and rejects the possibility of moral absolutes. It esteems juxtapositions and elisions that elude rational criticism, in dance as in philosophy and politics. It is no longer admissible to say that a dance is "good" or "bad"; we can only explain its particular point of view.

The consequences of this intellectual collapse are insidious. In October, Bill T. Jones published an article in *The New York Times* about the impact of Osama bin Laden on dance. He argued that the AIDS crisis might offer clues, since that, too, was a "numbing, paralyzing crisis." AIDS? Disease and terror are both tragic, but surely they demand utterly different moral, political, and aesthetic responses. Disease is a germ that can kill. Terrorism is murder. Gender, ethnicity, and subjectivity may have been appropriate categories for understanding AIDS. But terror is different: it is objective, absolute, and socially indiscriminate.

And yet Jones conflates AIDS and terror as great misfortunes that can rescue us from the "aloof gestures of modernism" by inspiring a more expressive art in the "service of social change." At the end of his article, his voice rings out in a typical postmodern crescendo: "few other mediums besides dance will offer us such raw, non-commercial opportunity to witness live bodies negotiate the tyranny of the present and its minefield of unforeseen events." But "bodies" do not negotiate, people do; "the present" is not tyrannical, the Taliban are.

It would be a mistake to think that choreography is unaffected by the linguistic pomposity that has seeped into the ways we talk about dance. Consider Patricia Hoffbauer, a noted Brazilian dancer and choreographer who has been working in New York since 1984. *The New York Times* recently published a big spread on how the events of September have changed her approach to her work. "Before," she explains, she had been deeply critical of the United States, in particular its policies in Latin America. But bin Laden showed her that America was really just a "big, stupid giant: instead of being a predator, it was this big bear being victimized, being hurt." Now Hoffbauer feels more American. She does not even disdain yuppies anymore. "Now I am part of the us." But don't be fooled: "before" and "after" are flip sides of the same teaching, that we are all victims now.

Hoffbauer's latest work, *Over My Dead Body*, is as confused as her talk. It was originally about stubbornness, she says, but after September the title seemed to her to suggest something more somber. How does this translate into dance? In fragments. To the usual postmodern compilation of styles—a little contact improvisation, a dose of release technique, a dollop of generic swoosh and

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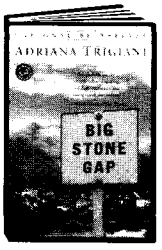

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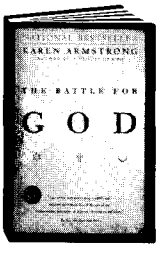

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swoop, a tease of speech and a twist of comic relief—she adds bin Laden–inspired bits and pieces: "Did they check your identity card today? They did mine." The result is awkward, lazy, and meaningless. Scenario follows scenario with no apparent overall structure. It is impossible to follow the thread. Movement fragments and verbal utterances can well be elements of art, but they must be fashioned into clearly crafted statements that make emotional and intellectual sense. The self-conscious "I am performing" quality of the Hoffbauer dancers is also embarrassing. Detachment works if it is turned to irony, but here it is just an attitude. Hoffbauer cites bin Laden's influence on her thinking, but I fear that the credit is hers alone.

THE MORE CONSERVATIVE world of ballet has been less prone to postmodern inanities, but that has not saved it from its own form of solipsism. Kevin McKenzie, the artistic director of American Ballet Theater, opened his company's New York season on October 23 with a quaint morality tale. His dancers were on tour when the tragedy hit. He encouraged them to dance, not because the show must go on, but because they were now part of the "healing process." The dancers, he reported, displayed a renewed seriousness, a purpose larger than the cuts and bruises of their own careers. Splendid. But why does it take mass murder to make us serious?

The answer is simple: ballet in recent years has been steeped in sentimentality and feel-good dance. This was nowhere more evident than in ABT's gala event, "A Tribute to the American Spirit," which included the "Prayer" solo from *Coppelia*, Eliot Feld's Stars-and-Stripes romp *Variations on America*, Nacho Duato's *Without Words*, Lar Lubovich's *My Funny Valentine*, and other suitably patriotic excerpts by noted American choreographers. The evening was rounded off with Balanchine's exuberant and poetic *Symphony in C*.

It was all a well-intentioned attempt to honor a dark moment with the means at hand, but it rang false. "Prayer" is pure nineteenth-century French lyricism, and it had no place evoking the memory of those who leaped to their deaths from the World Trade Center. One felt sorry for Ashley Tuttle, who danced well, but what could she do with this strange non sequitur? Excerpts yanked out of context and re-deployed to address contemporary events are doomed to failure. Paloma Herrera hesitated and blushed when she realized the emotional weight on her shoulders as she paraded through *Variations on America*. The piety was thickly spread, and the dancers looked earnest and uncomfortable with their new assignment. The problem with sentimentality is that it is a narcotic: the audience is invited to wallow in contrived emotion, in the hope that it will brim over into something real. But it doesn't, and we leave the theater feeling full but dissatisfied. We are "glad" to have had "good" patriotic feelings, but deep down we know that we have been emotionally had. Is this really what we need to "heal"?

All of these people are serious artists doing their best to respond to a horrendous event. David White has done much to make New York dance vibrant. Bill T. Jones is a major force in his art form. Kevin McKenzie has succeeded in making ABT a world-class company again. But that is precisely why it is so disturbing that their reaction to this crisis shows such ingrained habits of mind. Good intentions are not enough, in politics or in art. But especially in art: dance, after all, is not under attack. We have the luxury to think carefully, clearly, rigorously. This is not just a moral obligation, but an aesthetic one. Dances and dancers must be held accountable: they must make sense, even when the sense they make undermines sense itself. We are moved by dances that are skillfully wrought, with strong, internally consistent foundations, not by empty emoting or political sloganeering.

LEST WE FORGET that it can be done: in October, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, a Flemish choreographer in residence at the Theatre de la Monnaie in Brussels, brought *Drumming* to the Brooklyn Academy of Music. This dance was not "about" the Twin Towers, and no mention was made of the attacks. But the context was there, as it always is these days, quietly among us all. The performance began with the curtain up. The dancers and the musicians were on stage doing nothing in particular. They were just there, ready, waiting to begin. The lighting was warm but perfectly neutral. The stage looked big and promising in a cool, detached, blank-page kind of way. The audience barely noticed the performers, and milled about getting seated. It was an unremarkable but utterly crucial beginning. A sure, unobtrusive intimacy was established.

Then the music began, Steve Reich's pulsating percussive score *Drumming*, which was written two decades ago. A woman in a white shift and a bright orange shirt ran in a wide arc across the stage and began to dance. The movement was natural, easy, and unself-conscious; except that it was complicated, fast, rhythmic, turned inside out, taken apart, and rebuilt before our eyes. It was based on release technique (loose, jointy movement made by letting muscles go rather than tightening or holding) infused with human warmth, dynamics, and breathtaking speed. Other dancers, mostly dressed in simple white garments, joined her. Each dancer had steps and patterns, which cut across each other in geometrically precise designs. They intersected, danced together, and went on.

It was busy and extremely impersonal, but we grew to care about them, got a feel for their ways without actually knowing anything about any given individual. The pace was relentless, the musicians came and went, the lighting shifted from warm gold to cool silver and back again. The dance unfolded spontaneously but inevitably. Then, all of a sudden, the orange-shirted woman reversed her arc across the stage. As she ran, a glorious deep orange carpet rolled out behind her. In an instant, she dropped her orange shirt on the carpet and it was swallowed up in the light as if it had never been; she turned to look back. Nothing there. Blackout.

THE STANDING OVATION was spontaneous. The emotions were real. For that hour, nothing else mattered, and you could feel the elevated pulse of the audience leaving the theater. We had seen a dance so completely and compellingly set forth that it seemed like a phenomenon of nature. And there is a postscript. *Drumming* was made from material used in an earlier dance by De Keersmaeker, *Just Before*. The theme of *Just Before* was loss and memory. *Drumming* is strictly formal, but the tone and experience of the earlier work seeped through. This has nothing to do with the terrorist attacks, of course; but in the hands of De Keersmaeker and her dancers, coincidence took on the urgency of necessity.

September 11 certainly has focused our minds, and some things, at least, are clearer than they were before. It is now possible to say, with a new conviction, that nostalgia, sentimentality, and postmodern narcissism make for inadequate and spiritually vacant art. We do not need dances that touch us because we "identify" with their politics; nor do we need to be plunged into vast seas of vague feeling. We need to speak, think, and dance with rigor and lucidity. Enough with forced artifice and the cowering aesthetics of "representation" and detachment. We need art, classical or otherwise, that is human and true. ■

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How we unlearned the art of war.

When America Blinked

By Robert Kagan

I.

Four decades ago, the American foreign policy establishment possessed a reasonable measure of confidence, in their nation and in themselves, in their ability to understand and to wield power, in their conviction that the exercise of American power was benevolent. The leaders of this establishment, epitomized by the patrician man of steel Dean Acheson, had seen their nation victorious over the Nazis and Imperial Japan, and had thrown themselves into a new and complicated struggle with the Soviet Union, with the expectation not of perpetual stalemate, but of eventual victory.

The two sets of conflicts flowed together. The victory in 1945 had proved the superiority of the American system and American principles over fascism, and also the necessity of putting military power behind those principles. The Soviet challenge was dangerous. Communism was an especially suffocating form of tyranny, but it posed as a more humane alternative to democratic capitalism, and thus challenged the very core of the American national creed. The battle was unavoidably moral and ideological as well as geopolitical. The American establishment proposed to address the Soviet challenge by building and maintaining what Acheson described as "situations of strength" around the world, by amassing what the historian Melvyn Leffler has called a "preponderance of power" in both the geopolitical and the geo-economic realms, until such time as the superior West inevitably prevailed. But there was also a war of ideas to be waged: a demonstration of the superiority of the American system. In postwar Europe, the American foreign policy establishment applied this strategy and achieved a triumph perhaps unmatched in human history, a triumph produced by confidence and also producing confidence in the men who engineered it.

The American foreign policy establishment was hardly infallible. During the first two decades after the end of World War II, this largely Eastern and Eurocentric establishment made many mistakes outside of Europe, from the miscalculations about Korea to the mishandling of postcolonial Indochina. It held within its ranks some important figures, such as George Kennan, who were given more to doubt than to confidence about American democracy and its capacity to sustain itself over a long Cold War conflict. A small wing of this establishment, epitomized by Eleanor Roosevelt and Henry Wallace, did not believe in "situations of strength," or in a preponderance of power, or in power at all, but in the ameliorative promise of international organizations and the alleviation of world poverty. Nor did any part of the establishment handle well the twin challenge posed by the Communist agents in their midst and the assault by Joseph McCarthy, which was both anti-Communist and anti-establishment.

War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton, and the Generals
by David Halberstam
(Scribner, 543 pp., $28)

Still, for a bit more than two decades, from the administration of Harry Truman to the administration of John F. Kennedy, the establishment held relatively firm. To be sure, the establishment figures who came to lead the nation during and after World War II, and later under Kennedy, suffered from a confidence bordering on hubris. But the charge of hubris seemed fairer in hindsight, after it became clear that the Vietnam War was a debacle. Before that, not even David Halberstam had accused them of hubris. The men who made American foreign policy were simply and purely confident.

Theirs was not a blind confidence, it was a considered confidence. In this they were lineal descendants of other confident Americans, part of an American strain reaching back to Henry Stimson, back further to Theodore Roosevelt, and back further still to Henry Clay, John Quincy Adams, and Alexander Hamilton. The nation's founders had also been men of confidence, even of arrogance. They, too, saw themselves in a historic role, and believed themselves to be up to the challenge. If James Wilson could predict, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, that "the glory of America will rival—it will outshine the glory of Greece," it hardly seemed outlandish for Americans in the second half of the twentieth century to envision national greatness. The American establishment's confidence was a virtue, and a benefit for the nation whose course in the world they played an inordinate role in steering.

As everyone knows, this establishment destroyed itself in Vietnam. And it was true that some of the very qualities that made the establishment strong in World War II and in the early decades of the Cold War, some of the very principles that guided American actions successfully in Europe, also helped to steer the nation into a disastrous and possibly unwinnable war in Indochina. Since then, the foreign policy establishment has never been the same. Vietnam made confidence a dirty word. Halberstam and other prominent writers fixed it in the popular mind, and in the elite mind, that "the best and the brightest" were dangerous. To be among the best and the brightest was to stand accused of criminal incompetence. And what did that mean about America? If our best and our brightest could not be trusted not to destroy us, then we were doomed. Could American power be wielded with a measure of confidence? No, it was impossible to wield power at all. Was national greatness a possibility if the best among us were fools? For a post-Vietnam liberal establishment shorn of its confidence in itself and in its nation, greatness, too, became a dirty word.

David Halberstam's new book is his second about Vietnam and the American foreign policy establishment. In his immensely popular book *The Best and the Brightest*, which appeared in 1972, Halberstam helped to destroy the old establishment, punishing its leaders for their arrogance, their hubris, in taking America deep into a losing war. Two decades later, he writes about the remnants of that establishment in the 1990s, a younger generation, many of them his friends, now at the helm but this time not confident or arrogant at all—scarred, paralyzed with indecision, morally uncertain, politically timid, strategically unmoored, haunted still by the "ghosts of Vietnam."

Halberstam writes that the inspiration for this latest look at the foreign policy elite came to him in the spring of 1999,

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when the United States was in the midst of bombing Serbia and Serb forces in Kosovo. Halberstam was surprised to learn from his friend Leslie Gelb that the driving forces behind the war, the "hawks," were Vice President Al Gore and a number of liberal Democrats at the highest reaches of the Clinton administration. And Gelb, too—onetime editor of the Pentagon Papers, now president of the Council on Foreign Relations—was a hawk.

That all this should have surprised him is itself surprising, one of several signs in this book that Halberstam, though a keen and sometimes brilliant observer of the establishment in Washington, is also something of a Rip Van Winkle when it comes to the last two decades of American foreign policy. When he stopped paying close attention, around 1975, the liberal Democratic establishment was reliably dovish. Then there were twenty years when Halberstam turned his journalistic and analytical skills variously to the American media, Japan Inc., professional baseball, amateur rowing, and Michael Jordan. And when he looked up, there was the liberal establishment dropping bombs again. This prompted Halberstam to begin an article for *Vanity Fair* to answer the question, as he told the people whom he interviewed at that time, of how the post-Vietnam foreign policy establishment came to lead America into war again, this time in the Balkans. And just as an article on McGeorge Bundy in 1969 had turned into *The Best and the Brightest*, the *Vanity Fair* article turned into his present best-seller.

But there is, as they say in journalism, a backstory. For Halberstam's professional and intellectual evolution over the years is a story in itself, in many ways more interesting than his latest book. Although he is our master chronicler of the American establishment, and sometimes a harsh critic, his own views have always been very much those of the establishment. To trace the shifts in those views over the years, to see where a man such as David Halberstam stands on the great issues of the day, is illuminating all by itself.

II.

Few readers of *War in a Time of Peace* may recall it, but four decades ago the young David Halberstam was himself a classic liberal anti-Communist hawk. Halberstam, too, once had the confidence that characterized the establishment. His Pulitzer Prize–winning reporting from Vietnam in 1962 and 1963 blew the lid off the Kennedy administration's hapless conduct of the war in the early stages of the American intervention. Yet the reporter's own convictions about American purposes in Indochina were at that time indistinguishable from those of the American foreign policy establishment then dominating official Washington. Like Dean Acheson and Clark Clifford, like McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy, like Robert McNamara and Maxwell Taylor, like Henry Cabot Lodge, Averill Harriman, and Ellsworth Bunker, like Joseph Alsop and James Reston, like John Paul Vann and Edward Lansdale, like Lyndon Johnson and most members of Congress, like John F. Kennedy, David Halberstam believed that the United States had little choice but to try to stave off a Communist takeover of South Vietnam.

"I thought Vietnam was worth saving," Halberstam later recalled, and he held to that conviction for some time. Even as a tiny handful of Washington officials, led by George Ball, were coming around to the opposite conclusion, Halberstam, like the Bundys, was steady. "What about withdrawal?" he asked rhetorically in *The Making of a Quagmire*, a book written in 1964 and published in 1965, just as the Johnson administration, asking itself the same question, prepared to step up American involvement. And he answered precisely as the Johnson administration did: "Few Americans who have served in Vietnam can stomach this idea." Halberstam had served in Vietnam, made his career in Vietnam. He could not countenance the idea of abandoning it to communism. He knew that "those Vietnamese who committed themselves fully to the United States" would "suffer the most under a Communist government," managing at best to survive in "a drab, lifeless and controlled society" while "we lucky few with blue passports retire unharmed."

The Vietnamese people, Halberstam believed in 1965, "deserve better." He had little sympathy for the alleged nationalist, anti-imperialist motivations of the North Vietnamese Communists and their leader Ho Chi Minh. That "old Bolshevik" had managed to "exploit" nationalism, Halberstam wrote in *Quagmire*. Ho's nationalism only "camouflaged the hard-core Communist apparatus." After three hard years covering the war, the savvy reporter concluded that the Vietcong were "part of a systematic and calculated conspiracy on the part of the Communist government in Hanoi to take over the South." Hanoi "directed the war, set its pace, controlled its overall strategy and articulated the propaganda aims of the Vietcong."

Nor were the Vietcong merely the beneficent liberators of an oppressed Vietnamese peasantry. Yes, the peasantry was oppressed. But to raise peasant consciousness, Halberstam continued, the Vietcong used mass terror. Yes, the Vietcong won local sympathy by killing corrupt village chiefs. But they also executed able and honest village chiefs and decapitated schoolteachers by the hundreds in front of their students, all to demonstrate that the Saigon government "could not protect its people." As William Prochnau recounted in *Once Upon a Distant War*, a sharp chronicle of Halberstam and other Vietnam correspondents in the Kennedy years, Halberstam "saw his country not only as America the Great but America the Good." And if "Vietnam couldn't defend itself against the advance of the Communists, then his powerful country not only should help but had a *moral* duty to do so."

The strategic matters at stake seemed obvious, too. Vietnam was "vital to our national interest," Halberstam wrote in 1965. American withdrawal would damage the "United States' prestige throughout the world." The "pressure of communism on the rest of Southeast Asia" would "intensify." The "enemies of the West" would be "encouraged to try insurgencies like the one in Vietnam." An "anti-Communist victory in Vietnam," on the other hand, would "discourage so-called wars of liberation," just as the American commitment in Korea in 1950 had "served to discourage overt Communist border crossings ever since." For Halberstam, the war in Vietnam was (as Ronald Reagan would later say) a noble cause.

The problem, as Halberstam discovered upon his arrival in Vietnam in 1962, was not the rationale for intervention. No, the problem was the titanic incompetence of the American and South Vietnamese conduct of the war, an ineptitude compounded by the willful deception and self-deception of top American civilian and military officials. The lying enraged Halberstam. It also gave him the reporting opportunity of a lifetime. Senior American commanders in Vietnam were telling civilian officials in Washington, who were in turn telling the public, that the war would be "over by Christmas." They said it every year.

The military and the Kennedy administration officials derided the Vietcong as primitive little men in "black pajamas," but Halberstam was on to the big story of the war. "We are going up against the best revolutionaries of our time," he wrote, "on their home ground in a type of war which they have almost invented." He marveled at "the incredible arrogance of the upper-level American military establishment in this crisis." They were arrogant not because they were intervening in Vietnam, but because they refused to believe that they were doing so ineffectively, that they were losing. Washington and the senior military brass were pressing ahead with

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no feel for the new kind of war that they were fighting, with no seriousness about the magnitude of the conflict into which they had entered, and with no willingness to be square with themselves or with the American people. Halberstam had a little more sympathy for Kennedy, who he believed was "deceived" by an American military systematically "reporting the war inaccurately." But he also recognized that Kennedy was a part of the deception. The president, angered by Halberstam's all too accurate reporting, tried to get him transferred out of Vietnam, prompting Halberstam to exclaim, appropriately: "Well, fuck him."

Still, Halberstam wrote to educate the administration, not to undermine it. Most of his best reports came from the American military itself, from John Paul Vann and other mid-level officers so frustrated at the blind stupidity of their immediate commanders that they used Halberstam and the American press as a channel of dissent to the commander-in-chief. Vann was confident that he knew how to win the war. Halberstam was confident that he could help the United States win with his reporting. "Now they'll understand!" Halberstam would exult when one of his stories broke through the "great Saigon lying machine." He later remarked on the irony that while the Kennedy administration was calling him and other American reporters in Vietnam "a bunch of liberals who opposed Diem on ideological grounds," in fact "much of our information came from men like Vann."

Halberstam's opposition to Ngo Dinh Diem was not primarily ideological. Like Averill Harriman and Henry Cabot Lodge, he believed that the war could not be won as long as Diem remained in power, and he used his reporting to convince Kennedy to get rid of him. In this, Halberstam succeeded, and thereby he played a not inconsiderable part in what most historians consider the critical turning point in American involvement in the war, the moment when the United States took ownership of it. That was one irony on which Halberstam, who later turned against the war and the men who made it, did not later comment. On the day of the coup and Diem's assassination, Halberstam did not see the perils of a suddenly irreversible American commitment to victory. He saw the first glimmer of hope for progress in the war. And no doubt so did those with whom he lunched on the day of the coup, his fellow reporters and a young man named Richard Holbrooke, who had once been a *New York Times* copy boy and now worked for the United States Operations Mission in Saigon.

Halberstam was once asked, by Ward Just, what would have happened "if he had focused not just on the lying and whether the war was being won or lost, but on the Cold War mentality that drew the United States into Vietnam in the first place." Halberstam responded that to report on Vietnam from that angle would have made him "unemployable." But that was not the reason. The Cold War mentality, the foreign policy establishment's mentality: it was, in the 1960s, Halberstam's mentality, too. Having "come of age in the early 1950s, when such attitudes went virtually unquestioned in the United States," writes Daniel J. Singal in an apologetic introduction to the 1988 edition of *The Making of a Quagmire*, Halberstam still clung to "the assumption that any Communist-led movement was inherently evil and deserved to be eradicated."

Like most of the foreign policy establishment, moreover, Halberstam clung to it almost to the end of the Johnson administration. As late as December 1967, when he published an article in *Harper's* after a return to Vietnam, Halberstam still believed that "the enemy is a real one" and was worth fighting. But by then he was no longer committed to winning the war. He had concluded that it probably could not be won, and that the time was approaching to contemplate American withdrawal. Even then Halberstam did not conclude that the Kennedy and Johnson administrations had been mistaken in their commitment to Vietnam. No, they had been trapped. His view of the whole affair took on a tragic cast. Americans, he wrote, were "victims of recent history—not so much a history that we had made as a history that we had ignored."

Halberstam's shifting perspectives marked the shifts within the liberal establishment. It was in 1967 when the establishment peered into the abyss of Vietnam and blinked. By then Robert McNamara had turned against the war as unwinnable if not as immoral. The next year even Dean Acheson was advising President Johnson to cut his losses and get out. The establishment began to crack under the strain. These were the days when John McNaughton worried that everyone else thought the establishment was "out of its mind." And indeed, within another year, after the fracturing of the Democratic Party at the 1968 convention, the assassination of Robert Kennedy, the political destruction of Hubert Humphrey and Eugene McCarthy, and the election of Richard Nixon, the establishment was running away from its past.

III.

The establishment, and David Halberstam, might have turned against the war in Vietnam simply on the grounds that it was unwinnable, or at least not winnable at an acceptable price. They might have declared the war a mistake, well intended perhaps but poorly executed. But that was not how the liberal establishment, or Halberstam, explained their failure. Instead they disowned an entire worldview. Vietnam became not just a lost war in a good cause; it became a metaphor for everything that was wrong with America, the symbol of America's misplaced confidence in its own moral and physical superiority.

When Halberstam began writing *The Best and the Brightest* in 1969, it was almost as if the earlier Halberstam had never existed. No longer the liberal anti-Communist fretting over the incompetence of the generals, Halberstam's new angle of attack was that of the new anti-anti-Communist liberalism. Halberstam launched an assault not only on the "establishment" but also on his own worldview, on the judgments that he had formed and put into print but a few years earlier. The problem, he now wrote, "was not just American personnel, which was often incompetent, nor the government reporting, which was highly dishonest, nor the client government, which was just as bad as its critics claimed." No, the "real problem was the failure to reexamine the assumptions of the era." Here was Halberstam's answer to Ward Just.

Halberstam now took the Bundys and McNamara to task not for incompetence but for believing what he had once believed, that the war in Vietnam was "a war of Communists against anti-Communists." He accused them of "hubris," but by that he no longer meant their unfounded confidence in America's ability to defeat the Vietcong. He meant that in their "hubris" they had not bothered to learn, or had refused to see, that the issue in Southeast Asia was not communism but nationalism. The Indochina conflict was really a colonial war "against an indigenous nationalist force." The Kennedy and Johnson administrations had made "no real attempt to analyze Ho Chi Minh's position in terms of the Vietnamese people." McCarthyism had driven out the experts who could have told them, and they ignored the few experts still at hand. Top officials such as Walt Rostow, who knew nothing about Vietnam, thought that "Ho and men like Che Guevara were evil, out to oppress rather than liberate." They had not understood the indigenous appeal of the Vietcong, with its "skilled propaganda," its "rural recruitment," and its clever exploitation of "the multitude of local grievances against the government." They had accepted the absurd premise of the "domino theory." Experts, Halberstam suggested, could have told them that it

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was all nonsense. Experts knew that communism was not monolithic. The greatest error of all, Halberstam now suggested, was the American government's failure to understand and to act on the implications of the Sino-Soviet split.

To be sure, in all Halberstam's writings about Vietnam from 1962 through the end of 1967, he had never made much of that split. And the white-heat brilliance of Halberstam's attack in *The Best and The Brightest* may have been fueled by the fact that he himself had held fast, until quite recently, to the very principles, theories, and presumptions that he was savaging. Now Halberstam implicitly suggested that he had been the victim of a false consciousness. Now he had shaken free from the "Cold War mentality," and, though he did not entirely acknowledge his self-revisionism, he had adopted an entirely new perspective.

THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST was not the first articulation of this philosophical change. Cold War revisionism had already taken hold in the American academy by the time Halberstam published his book. But Halberstam's account was certainly the most widely read version of this revisionism, and it offered its readers the catechism of the new foreign policy establishment in its most entertaining and compelling form. It set forth the ideological and historical paradigm that was to dominate the dominant liberal Democratic wing of the establishment for the next two decades.

In this new paradigm, the Cold War had been part mistake, part right-wing conspiracy, and part creation of the capitalist class that dominated the Eastern establishment. It was not a conflict of principles: American democracy versus Soviet communism. It was certainly not the product of Soviet expansionism, any more than the conflict in Vietnam was a product of Ho's aggression. The early Cold War, Halberstam now wrote, "was an unreal time. Two great and uncertain powers were coming to terms with each other, a task made more difficult by their ideological differences (each believed its own myth about itself and its adversary)." The United States and the Soviet Union were "like two blind dinosaurs wrestling in a very small pit. Each thought its own policies basically defensive, and the policies of its adversary basically aggressive."

Having abandoned the Achesonian perspective himself, Halberstam turned on Acheson and his anti-Communist worldview. Acheson was now the original villain, "the principal architect of our commitment to Vietnam." His followers, the Bundys and other Democratic hawks, had believed in a "manifest U.S. destiny in the world." They had believed that "the great threat to the world was Communist, an enemy at once totalitarian, antidemocratic and antibusiness." Acheson and Forrestal "and their class" had seen the Soviet-American conflict as an "ism, not just two new great powers struggling to find their balance." They thought American principles and the American way of life were superior. They believed the "myth" that America told about itself.

And they had also been cowards. Burned by McCarthy and determined never again to be seen as "soft" on communism, the Acheson Democrats had thrown themselves and the country into Vietnam to prove their manliness. Far too many liberals had been "on the defensive about their past" and had "taken refuge in the new liberal anti-Communism." Halberstam did not offer any insight as to the origins of his own years in liberal anti-Communism. Had the young reporter adopted his hawkish perspective in Vietnam out of fear of McCarthyism? Presumably not. But that did not stop him from attributing that motive to every single Democratic policy-maker and politician in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

Although his most obvious villains were the Bundys and McNamara, the devil that made them do it, lurking behind the scenes, was the American right wing. Not McCarthy himself, of course, who had been buried years before Kennedy took office. But "the real McCarthyism went deeper in the American grain than most people wanted to admit; an odd amalgam of the traditional isolationism of the Midwest, the anxiety of a nation living in a period of new and edgy atomic tensions and no longer protected from adversaries by the buffer of its two adjoining oceans." This was a long way toward declaring America inherently McCarthyite, with the Republican Party merely the eager instigator, and the Democratic Party the cowering victim, of an ingrained paranoia, hysteria, and hatred. And this national obsession explained the Vietnam debacle: "A kind of demonology about a vast part of the world [had] become enshrined as accepted gospel. One major political party [was] too frightened to challenge it, the other delighted to reap the benefits from it."

AS HALBERSTAM PULLED down the main pillars of the old liberal anti-Communist establishment, he also set the foundation stones for the new anti-anti-Communist liberal establishment that would take its place. If the old and discredited wisdom had been the Achesonian belief that "the great threat to the world was Communist, an enemy at once totalitarian, antidemocratic and antibusiness, that the Communists must be stopped and that the Communists understood only one thing, force," the new wisdom could be found in what Halberstam identified as the beleaguered and betrayed Eleanor Roosevelt wing of the liberal Democratic establishment.

This wing, represented by the great president's widow and the failed candidate Adlai Stevenson, believed not in armaments and "situations of strength" but in arms control and an early form of détente with the Soviet Union. They considered "nationalism," of the sort that had reared up in Indochina, to be "the new and most potent force in the Third World"—a force not to be challenged but respected and cultivated. And unlike the anti-Communist Achesonians, they believed that the "greatest threat in the world might prove to be not communism, but the combination of the arms race plus hunger and poverty in the Third World." Ridiculed as "soft" by the macho Achesonians, it was the Eleanor Roosevelts and the Stevensons who were truly courageous, for unlike the Democrats in power, they had not been deterred from their dovishness by fear of the Republican right and a McCarthyite middle America.

IN *THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST*, Halberstam scoured the archives to rediscover the lost heroes of the new establishment, the brave few who had not succumbed to the Cold War mentality. Halberstam's new pantheon included Chester Bowles, who "simply did not take the Russian threat that seriously" and thought "the real dangers in the world were hunger and poverty"; and George Ball, who had been willing to defend Henry Wallace and who did not "consider it a particularly bad thing for most of Africa to go Communist"; and Paul Warnke, "marvelously irreverent and iconoclastic toward all the myths of the period," who "could never understand why a smart politician like Jack Kennedy was always talking about being against insurgencies when we should have obviously tried to be for them"; and, of course, Adlai Stevenson, the man of "humanist" values, the ultimate lost hero who had been seduced and abandoned by the conniving and cowardly Kennedy in 1960. In the end, it was Kennedy's betrayal of the liberal anti-anti-Communists that had spelled disaster for the liberal establishment and the nation. "It would only be later, as the full tragedy of the Vietnam War unfolded and a Stevenson disciple named Eugene McCarthy challenged Johnson," that the "liberal community looked back to see where it had gone wrong."

For Halberstam, that long, strange trip

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was personified by Daniel Ellsberg. This "normal humanist student" had "drifted, during the years of the fifties, into the world of defense studies and theories, believing that the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union was the key to the survival of all values." In 1965, Ellsberg went to Vietnam and saw that the United States was losing. In 1969, he publicly criticized Nixon's policies in Vietnam. At that point he presumably concluded, along with the rest of the liberal establishment, that the U.S.-Soviet competition was not "the key to the survival of all values" after all. Halberstam recounts that when an old college friend, after reading about Ellsberg in the newspaper, wrote to ask if he was the Dan Ellsberg he knew in college, Ellsberg responded, "I haven't been for a long time, but I am again." It was, Halberstam wrote in a rare, almost autobiographical moment, "an epitaph for many in that era."

THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST was a powerful book, but there was some confusion about its argument. Halberstam seemed to suggest on the one hand that certain individuals were responsible for the Vietnam debacle—"the best and the brightest," Bundy, McNamara, Kennedy, and Johnson—and that other individuals, Bowles, Ball, Matthew Ridgway, might have prevented it had anyone given them the chance. But on the other hand there was the "Cold War mentality," which seemed to transcend individuals. As Victor Navasky remarked in his review of the book in the *Times*, it was fine to enumerate the sins of Bundy and McNamara, but was it not the system that drove the United States into Vietnam?

Navasky had a point, for in the end Halberstam really was condemning not a handful of Americans but America itself. If Acheson and his disciples believed in a "manifest destiny" for the United States, if they believed in the moral superiority of the democratic capitalist system and the evil of communism, if they believed in America's eventual triumph in the Cold War, and if they believed that American power was a force for good in the world—this worldview, though disparaged and condemned by Halberstam and the new liberal establishment, was not the peculiar creation of one group of men at a peculiar time in American history. It was as old as the Founding. It sprang directly from the core of America's universalist ideology, what Halberstam referred to as the great "myth" of the American nation.

Myth or not, moreover, the vast majority of Americans believed in American superiority, and they were not taught it at Groton. Chicago policemen, New York City hard hats, Italian and Irish working class, and all the rest of the great unwashed outside the establishment enclaves partook in the myth along with the Bundys. And they kept it up after the establishment abandoned the "myth" and retreated into the sophistication of doubt and pessimism. But the establishment now had a different view of America. "Many Americans still want to hear that we are 'Number One' in the world," Anthony Lake noted with dismay in 1976. The establishment now hoped that Americans could get beyond such dangerous, hubristic fantasies, as the establishment had done.

In 1976, the Council on Foreign Relations published a collection of essays called *The Legacy of Vietnam*. The editor was Anthony Lake. Lake had traversed the same course as Ellsberg and Halberstam: vice consul in Hue and Saigon from 1962 to 1964, then special assistant to Henry Kissinger until resigning in protest over the 1970 invasion of Cambodia, then foreign policy adviser for presidential candidate Edmund Muskie in 1972. Most of the essays that Lake collected—by the likes of Holbrooke, Gelb, Warnke, and Humphrey—shared what Lake considered a hopeful assumption, that since Vietnam there had been "a welcome shift toward recognition of the limits to American power and responsibility." In what passed for optimism in those days, Lake suggested that "if Vietnam gives us more humility than self-hatred, caution rather than unconcern, then we shall have profited something from its horror." Along with anti-anti-communism, humility and caution had become the watchwords of the new liberal establishment.

The guiding principle of the new establishment was the recognition of limits: limits to America's power, limits to the universal appeal and relevance of American principles, limits to America's global responsibility. Although they condemned the Cold War mentality and blamed the Vietnam War on anti-communism, the new liberal establishment knew that it had really been the sense of mission and global responsibility that had brought the United States into Vietnam, had brought the establishment itself into Vietnam, and had kept them there. They understood that to keep the United States out of future Vietnams, it was not enough to soften American anti-communism. Americans would also have to be convinced that many, if not most, of the world's problems were not their responsibility, that they had no special role to fulfill in the destiny of mankind but were just another great power. They would have to be persuaded that when it came to civil war in Vietnam, and to many similar conflicts

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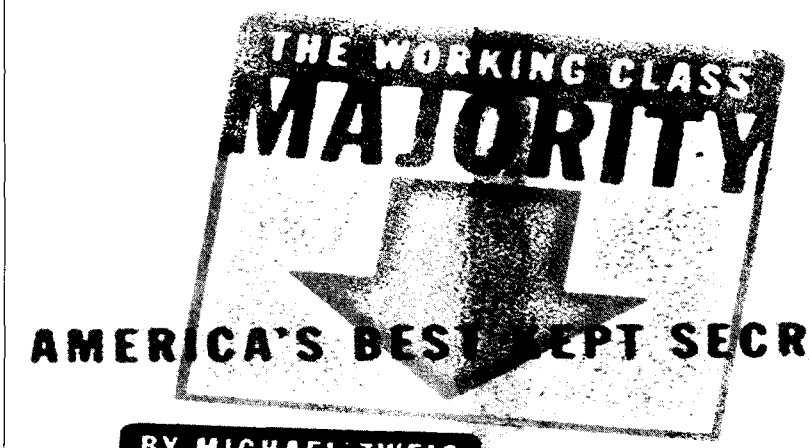

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around the world, the United States simply had no business or interest in involvement. Or as a later secretary of state would put it, it did not "have a dog in that fight."

IV.

At least some of the initial anger and hatred with which this transformed liberal administration greeted the Nixon administration in 1969 stemmed from Richard Nixon's apparent rejection of these lessons and assumptions. Politically, Nixon played to the hard hats' persistent patriotism, and against the establishment's "un-American" pessimism. In foreign policy, Nixon still seemed locked into the old Cold War mentality. As a born-again William Bundy many years later complained, Nixon remained "the archetype, perhaps even the caricature of the Cold Warrior."

On the surface, at least, Nixon refused to agree that the big issues in the world were nationalism and poverty, not communism. His style of foreign policy was in the old mode of American omniscience and omnipotence. Rather than approach the world with humility and caution, Nixon's and Henry Kissinger's foreign policy was a long-running high-wire act of dazzling virtuosity. They ordered governments toppled, they bombed, they invaded. They treated the world as a superpower chessboard. They brimmed with confidence, even when they were losing. And, much to the establishment's surprise and annoyance, Nixon refused to pull out of Vietnam, and for precisely the same reasons—a sense of responsibility for the South Vietnamese, a concern for national prestige, a domino theory of global politics—that the establishment had refused to pull out.

As Bundy later expressed the liberal establishment's fundamental charge, Nixon simply "never made the leaps that history called for." At a time when "the United States should have been moving out of the mold of the Cold War and into the era when local and regional crises were more important than superpower rivalry, and economics were more influential than geopolitics at any level," Nixon persisted in playing the old game. The liberal establishment had leaped and moved, and repented of their "Cold War mentality," and returned to the warm embrace of Eleanor and Adlai; but Nixon was still committing the original sin of believing in the Cold War and in American responsibility.

What the liberal establishment did not realize was how much Nixon and Kissinger were like them. They were like them, above all, because they, too, were a product of Vietnam. Perhaps they still looked at the world through the prism of the Cold War, but unlike the old Achesonians, Nixon and Kissinger were no longer thinking about victory. Perhaps they believed in power, but they believed that American power was in short supply and had to be carefully husbanded. Yes, Nixon and Kissinger escalated the war in Vietnam, but they escalated in order to withdraw. They invaded Cambodia to get out of Indochina. They played hardball against Communists in Chile; they used power and made compromises the way the old liberal establishment had, a way now deemed criminal by the new liberal establishment. But it was all part of an effort to make an orderly retreat. Their appeal to hard-hat patriotism was a way of providing political cover at home as they pulled America back from confrontation abroad.

Moreover, Nixon and Kissinger had adopted the post-Vietnam wisdom of the new liberal establishment. They opened the door to China, finally exploiting the Sino-Soviet split that the liberal establishment had convinced itself was the key to unlocking the mysteries of the universe. They pursued arms control and disarmament, and more effectively than Kennedy and Johnson had pursued it. They were devoted to détente; indeed, they invented détente. And in Vietnam they finally learned humility.

By 1972, as word of Watergate was just getting out, the liberal establishment had decided that Nixon was practically one of them. Halberstam's second big book on the establishment, *The Powers That Be*, which was published in 1979, recounted how eager the establishment had been to welcome Nixon by 1972. "Nixon, after all, was a man of the center, a nonideological man, his politics were never the politics of the left or the right. His views on racial policy were about the same as Georgetown's." And, as it turned out, so were his views on foreign policy. Détente was the establishment's dream, and it made other sins more forgivable. The establishment thus tolerated Nixon, and it embraced Kissinger. "No one tap-danced his way through Georgetown so neatly," Halberstam wrote. Kissinger "played it all with suavity and skill, charming Mrs. Graham, taking credit for Nixon's foreign policies when they were good ones, or when they were disastrous ones, like the invasion of Cambodia, raising an eyebrow slightly to let friends know that the fault was not his." When *Time* made Nixon and Kissinger its "Men of the Year" in 1973, the establishment bestowed its blessing on at least the foreign policy of the administration. "There it was," Halberstam noted sourly—he was less willing to forgive the old red-baiter—"the China trip, the Moscow trip." The establishment was sold.

Still, the importance of détente and the new China policy notwithstanding, what really mattered was the "realist" perspective that undergirded the Nixon-Kissinger approach. Kissingerian foreign policy was based, above all else, on the presumption of limits: limits on American power, limits on the universal applicability of American principles, limits on America's capacity to prevail against its foes in the world, limits on America's responsibility to solve what Reinhold Niebuhr had once called "the world problem."

Far from waging an ideological battle against Soviet communism, Kissinger believed that "ideological conflict" would only "deepen international schisms." Far from seeking victory in the Cold War, Kissinger insisted on the "imperative of coexistence." In justifying détente, Kissinger deliberately distanced himself from the Achesonian version of containment. He dismissed as illusory the expectation of the early Cold Warriors that "containment would transform the Soviet Union." The best that Americans could hope for, he argued in the mid-1970s, was "mutual restraint, coexistence, and, ultimately, cooperation" between the two superpowers. Americans must not "mesmerize themselves with simple solutions"—like victory in the Cold War.

Kissinger and the liberal establishment differed on many matters, especially on the primacy and the legitimacy of power, but they were in fundamental agreement on a few cardinal principles: that there were severe and permanent restrictions on American might, that American ideology was dangerous, and that what the American people needed was not a sense of grandeur but a sense of humility. And in time, from about 1976 onward, Kissinger himself became the establishment, the dean of a Republican wing of realism side by side with the realists of the transformed liberal Democratic establishment. The two sides politely criticized each other throughout the 1970s, and there was a partisan divide between them, but it was easily crossed in the name of what Halberstam calls the "bipartisan center." At the Council on Foreign Relations, in the salons of New York and Georgetown, in the pages of *The New York Times*, and in the greenrooms of the Sunday talk shows, the two wings of the establishment lived in roughly amicable co-existence within the bipartisan center. In time, even Halberstam forgave and forgot. He eventually would laud the Kissingerian wing, reincarnated in the administration of George Herbert Walker Bush, as comprising the wisest heads and the steadiest

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hands in the American foreign policy establishment.

WHAT MOST UNITED the two wings of the establishment was their common enemy. From the middle of the 1970s through the end of the 1980s, a new coalition arose among conservative Republicans and disaffected former Democrats, old-style liberal anti-Communists who, because they were no longer in step with the rest of the liberal establishment, came to be known as "neo-conservatives." Picking up the old anti-Communist tradition, and reacting against the direction of Nixon and Kissinger's policies at the end of the Vietnam War, they rejected the doctrines of détente and arms control and, much to the dismay of both the liberal and the Kissingerian establishment, called for a return to the aggressive containment of the early Cold War, a resurrection of the old Achesonian principles. The conservative and neo-conservative anti-Communists insisted that the Cold War was an ideological struggle between good and evil—a struggle that the United States could win if it chose to fight. Their attack on détente culminated in 1976, when a beleaguered Gerald Ford all but jettisoned Kissinger. At the Republican convention that year, Ford almost fell to the man who became the political spokesman for the revived American anti-communism, Ronald Reagan. Ford's subsequent loss to Jimmy Carter led to Kissinger's being virtually cast out of the Republican Party in the late 1970s.

When Reagan defeated Carter in 1980, it was a double defeat for the establishment. The liberal establishment had been discredited by Carter's failed presidency. In Republican ranks, Reagan's victory came at the expense of the realist establishment. In foreign policy terms, Reagan's presidency was probably the most sweeping anti-establishment triumph of the twentieth century. Yet the truth is that Reaganism—that combination of ebullient confidence in the superiority of American society and determination to triumph over the evil of communism—was little more than the resurrection of the old establishment's worldview, Halberstam's worldview.

Reagan himself, after all, was an FDR Democrat turned conservative. His optimism and his confidence were mostly alien to the Republican Party, which for half a century, since the days of Roosevelt, had been the sour party of pessimism, bitterness, anger, and isolationism (and so it would become again after Reagan left office). Reagan's belief that America was both great and good was exactly the belief of the postwar liberal establishment. And this drove the post-Vietnam establishment crazy. The old movie actor confidently promoted the liberal establishment's old worldview as if there had never been a Vietnam, with its stern lessons of caution and humility and limits. Reagan called the Soviet Union an "evil empire" and predicted its demise—rhetoric that hearkened back to Truman and Acheson. He called the Vietnam War a "noble" cause, exactly what establishment types such as Halberstam had once thought. In short, Reagan, unlike Nixon and Kissinger, had refused to learn, refused to travel down the same path away from confidence, refused to understand, much less accept, the limits on power and responsibility.

Both wings of the establishment believed that Reagan's confidence about American strength and moral superiority, and his belief in eventual victory in the Cold War, would lead to disaster, perhaps even to thermonuclear holocaust. In his first term, Reagan stonewalled arms control talks, abandoned the SALT process, abandoned détente, abandoned even the idea that good relations with the Soviet Union were vitally important. Instead he conducted a massive arms build-up, regularly assailed the Soviet Union in moral terms, supplied arms to anti-Communist guerrillas in Central America, Africa, Southeast Asia, and Afghanistan, deployed new nuclear weapons in Europe, started the Strategic Defense Initiative, created "situations of strength" around the globe. Reagan's policies violated every post-Vietnam tenet of both wings of the establishment.

In Reagan's second term, however, the Soviets, led by Mikhail Gorbachev, began to sue for peace. Within months after Reagan left office, the Soviet empire began to collapse. Within three years, the Soviet Union broke up. The connection between Reagan's more confrontational approach and this unimaginably peaceful and successful conclusion to the Cold War was unmistakable. In the course of the coming decade, former Soviet officials and former dissidents, as well as many scholars from both the United States and the Soviet Union, offered compelling evidence that Reagan's arms build-up, his threat to build a missile defense shield, and his ideological challenge to Soviet communism had played an important role in compelling Soviet leaders to abandon strategies that had seemed so successful during the 1970s but had been made wanting by Reagan's late Cold War policies.

If this was even partly true, where did the end of the Cold War leave the establishment? The establishment had taught itself that American power was limited, that the United States could not have "saved" China or Vietnam. So how could it possibly have brought down the Soviet Union? The establishment had called upon Americans to accept perpetual co-existence with the Soviet Union, which meant restraining their messianic ambitions. But now co-existence was unnecessary, and so, it seemed, was self-restraint. The establishment had reconciled itself to the fact that the United States could not be "number one," as Reagan liked to say, and had positively celebrated the impossibility. Yet here was the United States, suddenly the "sole superpower," the uncontested global hegemon. The establishment had taught itself that American pretensions to be the bearer of universal principles and a superior morality were an arrogant "myth," no less arrogant than the pretensions of Soviet Communists to be the vanguard of global revolution—but here were American principles being celebrated in Warsaw and Berlin, and in Tiananmen Square. How would the establishment square this momentous historical achievement with its own transformed post-Vietnam worldview?

V.

DAVID HALBERSTAM SPENT the quarter of a century between the Republican convention in 1976 and the publication of *War in a Time of Peace* writing about other things. *The Best and the Brightest* made him a famous and rich writer and gave him the chance to apply his impressive skills more broadly. In 1981, the year Ronald Reagan took office, Halberstam published a book about the Portland Trailblazers. In 1985, the year Mikhail Gorbachev emerged on the world scene, he published a book about rowing. In 1986, the year of the dramatic Reagan-Gorbachev summit at Reykjavik, Halberstam published a book about the American automobile industry. In 1989, the year the Berlin Wall fell, he published a book about the 1949 pennant race, and five years later he published a book about the 1964 pennant race. In 1999, the year America went to war over Kosovo, Halberstam came out with a book about Michael Jordan.

One senses in *War in a Time of Peace*, his first return to the subject of American foreign policy in three decades, an understandable impatience to get back into the fray, and also to unburden himself of some long-held opinions, especially on the subject of the Cold War. Although the main subject of his book is American intervention in the post–Cold War 1990s, Halberstam wants to clear up some possible confusion about exactly who and what "won" the Cold War in 1989. Above all, he wants to show that, despite what many Americans may believe, it was the policy

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of détente that succeeded in bringing the Cold War to a peaceful conclusion. The end of the Cold War was not a refutation of the post-Vietnam liberal worldview Halberstam had propounded in *The Best and the Brightest*, it was a vindication of it.

"When George Bush had taken office," Halberstam writes in the new book, "the Soviet system had begun to collapse of its own weight." Halberstam rejects any claim that the end of the Cold War was a victory for anti-communism, either of the old, liberal, Achesonian variety of the 1940s and 1950s or the new, conservative, Reaganite variety of the 1980s. It was not a victory for "any one man or political faction." It was not even a victory for the United States. All that had happened was that the "myth" of communism was finally overtaken by reality. "Clearly by the eighties, Communist rule, as critics had long suggested, had undermined the nation itself."

This is the new revisionism about the end of the Cold War, and it is an appropriate bookend to the old revisionism that Halberstam popularized thirty years ago. The United States may have played a big part in starting the Cold War, but it had no part in ending it. The Soviet Union's collapse was the product of internal forces. Halberstam does acknowledge that part of Moscow's problem in the 1980s was that "the gap between American weaponry and that of the Soviets had begun to widen at an ever greater rate." But even so Halberstam does not credit the American arms build-up of the early 1980s. Nor does he mention the liberal establishment's vehement opposition to that build-up in the name of arms control. Instead, he suggests that in "a high-tech age when there was such an immediate and direct connection between the vitality of the domestic economy and a nation's military capacity," a gap simply opened, naturally. The Soviet Union fell behind in the arms race because its system pre-ordained that it must fall behind.

Halberstam assails the Reaganite "right wing" for believing otherwise, for imagining that Reagan's tougher anti-Communist policies, the continuation of the old Achesonian approach, had produced a victory for the West. He rejects the very notion of "victory." And he criticizes "the right" for believing that the end of the Cold War had moral import. When the Berlin Wall came down, Halberstam writes, the "right wing" wanted to believe that this "represented not merely the West's triumph in a long, difficult struggle against a formidable adversary, but equally important, a triumph in their minds of good over evil, proof that we had been right and they had been wrong, and that our system was politically, economically, ethically, and spiritually superior to theirs." This was the old Achesonian triumphalism, the old confidence, the old arrogance, the old simplistic moralism, the old refusal to accept limits on American power, the old lack of humility—in sum, the old Cold War mentality rearing its head.

David Halberstam by Alexandra MacMaster for The New Republic

In his new book, Halberstam explains that the real heroes of the Cold War's dénouement were not the Achesonians and the Reaganites, but the post-Vietnam establishment, specifically the Kissingerian wing of the establishment that came back to power in 1989 with the election of Bush. Some readers of *War in a Time of Peace* have found it surprising that Halberstam seems so admiring of the Bush administration, in some ways even more fond of this Republican team than of the Clinton Democrats who followed them into power four years later. But it is not surprising at all. Halberstam admires the Bush administration for the same reasons that the post-Vietnam liberal establishment had come to appreciate Nixon and Kissinger.

During the Cold War, Halberstam writes, the Bush men "had generally been détenters, seeking small slices of mutual accord with the Soviets and a reduction in nuclear tensions." They had viewed the Cold War as "an ongoing conflict between two superpowers," unlike "the Reagan people," who had seen the Cold War as "a clash between good and evil." The "Reagan people" had cared "not just about national security but rather which side was right and which side was wrong." And they wanted the right side to win. The Bush people had admirably eschewed such illusions. They were "cautious, befitting men who had grown up and come to power during a prolonged period of relentless Cold War tensions." While the Reagan "people" were reckless innocents abroad, believing they could change the world, the Bush "men" had grown up in an era "when you inherited a difficult, divided world, and if all went well during your tour of office, you handed off to your successor a difficult, divided world." For the Bush "men," just "keeping things from getting worse [was], in itself, a victory."

After the ideological exuberance and confrontationalism of the Reagan years, the Bush team of James Baker, Brent Scowcroft, Lawrence Eagleburger, and Colin Powell brought caution, humility, and a love of limits back into the American government. They were, Halberstam observes, "by and large the most careful of men, internationalists, anti-Communists, but not ideologues or moralists." They had "roots in the moderate, internationalist wing of the Republican Party, rather than in the competing Reagan wing, which

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often seemed more concerned about the morality of foreign policy."

HALBERSTAM CLEARLY SEES a continuation of the old dichotomy that he presented in *The Best and the Brightest*. In that book, Halberstam pitted Adlai Stevenson and Chester Bowles against Acheson and the Bundys in a struggle for the soul of the Democratic Party. In *War in a Time of Peace*, Halberstam depicts the internecine Republican fight between the Kissinger wing and the Reagan wing as another brave struggle of pragmatic men of peace against rabid anti-Communist ideologues. In his mind, perhaps, both struggles were the same.

In Halberstam's account of the end of the Cold War, the Bush administration and the dwindling ranks of moderate "pragmatic" Republicans saved the day from the Reaganites. The fall of the Berlin Wall was not a time for celebration, Halberstam insists, but a moment of acute danger requiring the utmost caution and restraint, and thankfully the Kissingerian establishment was in power. The Reaganites wanted to celebrate a triumph of good over evil, but Bush's prudent men, made wise by their long experience with the Cold War conflict, had far more modest aims. "Bush and his team seemed to have perfect pitch," Halberstam writes. "They knew how far to go at each moment, how much to push for change, when to back off and let events take their own course, and when to nudge them forward."

Halberstam's claim that the Bush administration possessed such mastery over events in the Soviet empire is rather strange, especially coming from him. The Soviet empire and the Soviet Union collapsed of their own weight, he claims, with no outside push from Reagan or anybody else. But when the rotten edifice of the Soviet empire came crashing down upon itself, suddenly the United States had a vital role to play. Bush and his men "deftly" managed the collapse, guiding down the falling shards and the tumbling blocks of the Soviet empire in an orderly fashion. James Baker, one of Halberstam's pragmatic heroes, once said that the only question about the break-up of the Soviet empire was whether it would be "a crash or a soft landing." Halberstam gives the Bush administration credit for bringing the plane down: "largely thanks to the skills of the different members of the Bush administration, it was a soft landing."

If one examines this assertion closely, it is clear that what Halberstam really admires about the Bush administration is not its skillful use of power. It is the extreme caution, the acute sense of the restrictions on American power at this historical moment. The Bush administration's aims at the end of the Cold War were so modest that they were almost invisible. Gorbachev had come to power, and Bush and his men hoped that he would remain in power. The Soviet empire began to crumble, and Bush and his men watched, hoping that it would not crumble too far or too fast. The Soviet Union itself began to break up, and Bush and his men hoped that it would remain intact. Bush and his men sought no more and no less than what Gorbachev sought. Their goal was to keep Gorbachev around as long as possible, because he was a helpful partner to the United States.

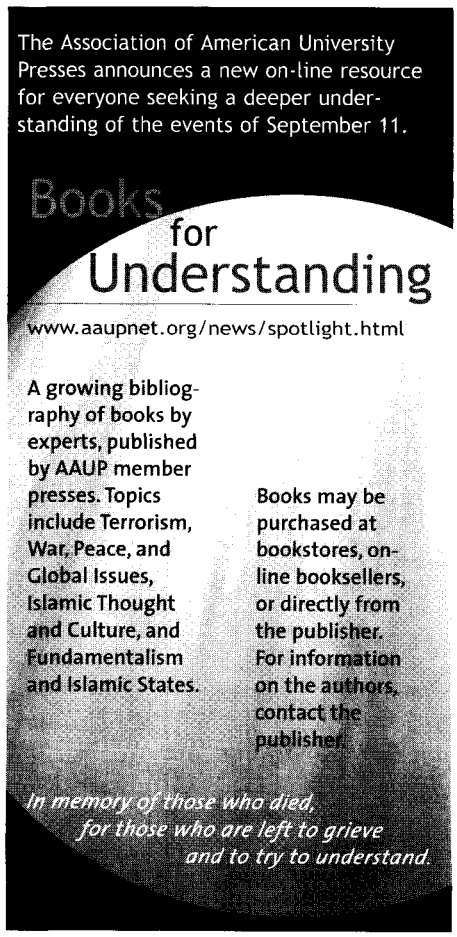
In essence, Halberstam's "détenters" tried to end the Cold War the way they waged the Cold War: in partnership with Moscow, in pursuit of co-existence instead of victory. Bush's New World Order, it is often forgotten, was not a declaration of American benevolent hegemony, but a call for the joint exercise of American and Soviet power over the world—the apotheosis of détente. Gorbachev's fall and the breakup of the Soviet Union were an accident, and for the Bush people an unwelcome one. When Gorbachev lost control, they lost control, too. Yet it was precisely the Bush administration's refusal to bring American power to bear on the situation that Halberstam appreciates. The "victory," as he sees it, was the product of a splendid humility and and a sterling caution, and of a proper distaste for American power and a sense of global American responsibility. It was a triumph, in short, of the post-Vietnam establishment's worldview.

VI.

DID THAT WORLDVIEW survive the end of the Cold War? This would have been a ripe subject for David Halberstam to explore. But to explore it would have required more self-awareness than he seems to possess, or more self-exploration than he cares to undertake. For there are two striking things about *War in a Time of Peace*. The first is that, in some very important ways, Halberstam, like the rest of the liberal foreign policy establishment, has moved away from the post-Vietnam worldview about America's role in the world, and, indeed, has edged back toward the perspective of the old postwar establishment. And the second striking thing is that Halberstam either is unaware of his change of heart or cannot come to grips with its implications.

The formal narrative of Halberstam's book, which is punctuated by informative flashbacks to earlier times, picks up after the fall of Gorbachev, and after the Persian Gulf war. It begins with the Bush administration, fresh from those triumphs, facing the new problem of Slobodan Milosevic and Serbian nationalist aggression in the Balkans, and it continues through the Clinton administration's handling of the Balkans, from the initial hesitancy to get involved in 1993 and 1994, to the Dayton peace plan and the intervention of 1995, through to the end of the Kosovo war in 1999. And while Halberstam touches on other conflicts in this period, his story is almost entirely about the crisis in Bosnia and America's faltering response. Brief discussions of other interventions and crises in the 1990s—in Somalia, Haiti, and Rwanda—provide background to help the reader understand the choices that the United States made in Bosnia. Even the longer section on the war in Kosovo in 1999 is something of an epilogue, a Bosnia that almost was but then wasn't. Halberstam's fascination is with the fits and starts of American policy toward the Bosnian crisis, the reluctance of the Bush and Clinton administrations to get involved, and the way in which their reluctance was eventually overcome by moral and political pressures to do something to stop the massive slaughter and the ethnic cleansing.

What stands out in Halberstam's account of these years, though, is the evolution of his own thinking. Again, he


The Association of American University Presses announces a new on-line resource for everyone seeking a deeper understanding of the events of September 11.
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professes to have been surprised in 1999 to find leaders of the post-Vietnam liberal establishment pressing for American bombing in Kosovo and armed intervention in Bosnia. If so, he must have surprised himself. For although Halberstam presents himself as a neutral observer of the conflict between those who wanted to intervene in the Balkans and those who resisted, his perspective is not at all neutral. His book tells the story from the perspective of the interventionists, and while Halberstam is often sympathetic to those who argued against intervention, no one could mistake his conviction that the United States was right to intervene with military force in the Balkans, and, indeed, that it ought to have done so much earlier and much more forcefully. Halberstam clearly believes that the Bush and Clinton administrations' refusal to act more effectively to stem the violence in the Balkans was a tragedy, and a significant failure in American foreign policy. Explaining this failure provides the drama of his story.

WHY DOES HALBERSTAM believe in American military intervention again? That is one question that he does not ask, much less answer. One wishes that he had. In his previous incarnations as a reporter and a writer, the question of America's proper role in the world—specifically, whether it was right to use its military power against "evil" abroad—had been a central part of his analysis. In the early and mid-1960s, Halberstam had argued, as the liberal establishment had argued, that the United States had a responsibility to "save" the South Vietnamese, one of many peoples around the world who depended upon the United States and who "deserved" to be saved from the unequivocal evil of communism.

This conviction was based on the further assumption, which Halberstam also shared with the liberal establishment of those days, that America was not only "great" but also "good," and that as such it had a moral obligation to save Vietnam. This was the Cold War worldview of the Acheson generation, the principles that undergirded the Truman Doctrine. And, as Halberstam later concluded, it was the kind of thinking that drove the United States into Vietnam. So, in *The Best and the Brightest*, Halberstam gave a different answer to the question. He decided that the United States did not, in fact, have the duty, the power, or the right to intervene to save the South Vietnamese or, presumably, any other peoples fighting an indigenous nationalist movement that happened also to be Communist. Halberstam no longer trusted the United States to be "America the good," and he believed it was folly to imagine that American power could be wielded effectively on behalf of principle.

So where does Halberstam stand today? He does not say. One suspects that he wants to believe in "America the good" again, that he believes American power can be wielded against evil, and that the United States is the civilized world's shield against tyranny and murder and barbarism. If Halberstam did not believe this, he could not justify his support for American armed intervention in the Balkans. But if he does believe in "America the good" again, those who have followed the evolution of this thinking over the years might want to know what exactly has changed. Why were Halberstam and other liberals, after the end of the Cold War, suddenly willing to kill to defend others from evil? Why was it acceptable again to employ American military might on behalf of American principles? In the case of Halberstam, one is left with the uncomfortable conclusion that the use of American military power was now acceptable precisely because it was not being used against Communists. Put the question this way: if Slobodan Milosevic had been a genuinely committed Communist as well as a nationalist, instead of being merely a nationalist (and a cynical nationalist at that), would Halberstam have supported American armed intervention against him?

Halberstam prefers to look at the issue from the other end of the telescope. He agrees that the presence of communism is the critical issue in explaining American foreign policy, but he seems to think that this applies only to those Americans who were uninterested in intervening in the Balkans. In fact, Halberstam believes that the end of the Cold War revealed an ugly truth about Americans, and in some ways it was the same ugly truth that he had proffered in *The Best and the Brightest*. Without the threat of communism, Halberstam believes, the American people no longer cared about the world. They no longer cared who killed whom. They no longer cared about good and evil.

In assessing the impact of the end of the Cold War on American foreign policy, Halberstam generally adheres to the conventional wisdom. He repeats the tired cliché that the new post-Communist world was "infinitely more complex" than the simpler times of the Cold War. The existence of the Soviet Union, he argues, gave policy-makers a "true north" to guide them through international waters and provided a consistent way of understanding and responding to a variety of challenges wherever they erupted. One would think that Halberstam's own journey from anti-communism to anti-anti-communism, from supporting Achesonian containment to rejecting it in the name of détente, would be evidence enough against the proposition that the Cold War was a simple time when everyone knew who the enemy was and what to do about it. "For more than forty years," Halberstam writes in *War in a Time of Peace*, "those who wore the black hats were always clearly labeled—they were Communists." Really? Last we looked, the guys in the black hats were the Bundy brothers.

WITH THE NEW complexity, Halberstam asserts, came the new apathy. In the 1990s, "a generation was coming of age in the Congress who cared less about foreign affairs, elected by a generation of voters who cared less, and reported on by a media that paid less attention." This from the man who spent the 1990s writing about baseball and Michael Jordan. Reprising a theme from *The Powers That Be*, Halberstam chastises the media for its commercial shallowness, its box office mentality, its preference for beauty queens over brains. He even manages to slight Christiane Amanpour, who, he writes, "had the good fortune, in a profession where cosmetics were so important, to be as attractive as she was talented."

Halberstam's main point is a more profound condemnation of the American soul. For it was not only that without the Soviet Union and communism no one understood; it was that no one gave a damn. Since dangerous men such as Slobodan Milosevic were no longer "controlled or driven by Moscow," since they were "just men in black hats capable of doing a great deal of harm," they could slaughter at will. The problem for Americans was that evil was no longer Communist evil. In the new post–Cold War era, "evil was simply evil." And that was not enough for Americans. What Leslie Gelb has called the "teacup wars" of the 1990s, Halberstam argues, "evoked not so much any immediate question of American national security as a question of American goodness and generosity of spirit and a long-term view that the less killing there was, the safer the globe was for everyone." But the benevolent internationalist appeal of "America the good," Halberstam insists, fell on deaf ears among an American people "whose soul, except in financial and economic matters, seemed to be more and more isolationist."

The selfish apathy of post–Cold War America had its effect on American presidents, and especially on Bill Clinton, ever attuned to providing the American people with what he believed they wanted. When Halberstam summarizes what had

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changed "so dramatically" after the end of the Cold War, first on his list is the fact that "the fear of being called soft on communism, something that had covertly played a large role in the Kennedy and Johnson decision-making, was no longer important." Clinton was a Kennedy without communism, and therefore without McCarthyism. And therefore he was inclined to do nothing.

BUT HALBERSTAM GOES one step even further in his criticism of post-Cold War America. He concludes, just as he did in *The Best and the Brightest*, that the problem is to be found not in individuals or in parties, but in the American people themselves. It is America. For Halberstam suggests, tentatively but unmistakably, that Americans had never cared about good and evil. American internationalism after World War II had never really been "true internationalism." It had been but "a thin veneer of internationalism that covered policies that were first, foremost, and finally almost completely anti-Communist." For Halberstam, in sum, America is a nation without a larger purpose, a nation without a soul.

What can one make of Halberstam's thesis? The idea that there was nothing to American foreign policy in the Cold War beyond anti-communism is a popular one, and not only among revisionist critics. Ironically, Halberstam, who played such a big part in constructing this myth in *The Best and the Brightest*, is the living refutation of this crabbed perspective. Did the young Halberstam oppose a Communist victory in Vietnam because he was a selfish, xenophobic, McCarthyite paranoiac? Anyone who reads the young Halberstam can see that, on the contrary, he was an idealist. He was genuinely concerned about the plight of the South Vietnamese who would be left to the mercies of their Communist conquerors. He believed that communism was "simply evil," and he believed, as did the liberal establishment, that America had an obligation, not only to itself but also to the world, to stem its advance.

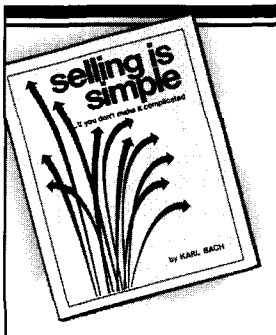
This American sense of responsibility to further and to protect liberal and democratic principles long preceded the Cold War. The fight against communism fit within a long-established American propensity to view the world as a grand struggle between (democratic) good and (tyrannical) evil. World War II had convinced most Americans, and certainly most leaders of the establishment, to embrace a most enlightened sense of the "national interest." It was a conviction, derived from the hard experience of World War II, that American indifference to others elsewhere, to their safety, their prosperity, and their freedom, was likely to come back to haunt Americans sooner or later. Like it or not, it was this powerful impulse to an enlightened, self-interested altruism that both saved Western Europe *and* drove the United States into Indochina during the Cold War. And after the Cold War it brought the United States into the Balkans.

In fact, the questions raised by the brutal wars in Yugoslavia in the post-Cold War era are not so different as Halberstam and almost everyone else imagines. What Halberstam writes of the "teacup wars"—that they "evoked not so much any immediate question of American national security as a question of American goodness and generosity of spirit and a long-term view that the less killing there was, the safer the globe was for everyone"—could with minor emendation have been written about America's intervention in Vietnam, too. Unless, of course, one had decided that the whole idea of "American goodness and generosity," the whole notion that the United States could use its power to make the world safer "for everyone," was an absurd myth, the very essence of American "hubris."

The end of the Cold War did not change everything. America was still the same America. It was selfish, but also at times remarkably selfless. It was self-absorbed, but also frequently concerned about horrors and crises overseas. A majority of Americans could be persuaded, if anyone troubled to make the case, that intervening in the Balkans, in Somalia, in Haiti, was the right thing to do, just as they could be persuaded, until their government could no longer persuade itself, that intervening to "save" South Vietnam was the right thing to do. Americans still believed in the "myth." They still believed in America the great and America the good.

It is a central tenet of the conventional wisdom, which Halberstam repeats, that Americans were unwilling to tolerate casualties in the wars of the 1990s. This is a critical assumption, because upon it rests the further conviction that Americans, therefore, did not care about "humanitarian" crises around the world. But Halberstam's assertion that the American people were especially averse to casualties in the post-Cold War era is belied by polls that have consistently shown the great body of Americans more willing to accept casualties than is generally assumed, even in so-called "humanitarian" conflicts.

Indeed, as the public opinion analysts Steven Kull and Clay Ramsay have recently noted, the most striking aspect of Halberstam's assumption about a



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casualty-averse America, an assumption widely shared by the foreign policy establishment, is the degree to which such judgments have proved "immune to polling data to the contrary." According to Kull and Ramsay, polls taken throughout the post–Cold War era "show little evidence that the majority of Americans are prone to respond to fatalities by wanting to withdraw U.S. troops." If anything, they find, "the public is more likely to want to respond assertively." And this is true even in cases of humanitarian interventions such as in Somalia. Americans, it turns out, are willing to engage in the kind of benevolent internationalism that Halberstam describes. They merely want to know that the actions they support are succeeding. As Kull and Ramsay report, "The critical determinant of the public's response is not whether U.S. vital interests are involved but whether the operation is perceived as likely to succeed."

Of course, the American foreign policy establishment does not believe this. It has for two decades refused to believe this. As Kull and Ramsay note, despite all poll evidence to the contrary, the foreign policy-making community has acted as if Americans were intolerant of casualties. The conviction has caused them "to hesitate from using force when they might otherwise have done so, and when using force to do so in a more cautious fashion than would be ideal from a military perspective." Why?

VII.

THE REASON IS simple. Put crudely, it is that the establishment has lost its nerve. It uses an alleged lack of public support as a crutch, an excuse. But, in truth, it is the establishment that has lost its confidence in itself and, by extension, its confidence in the country. It lost it all in Vietnam, and to this day it is not clear whether that confidence can be regained. Halberstam wants to blame the American people for American hesitancy in the Balkans. But perhaps this is because he cannot bring himself to blame the worldview that captured the establishment after Vietnam, the worldview that he has done so much to propagate.

The theme of *War in a Time of Peace* is the selfish narrowness of the American people. But Halberstam is too good a reporter not to reveal the real truth, which is that the American foreign policy establishment, in both its liberal wing and its realist wing, is crippled. It rendered itself terminally ineffective by the very "virtues" it has celebrated in the quarter-century since Vietnam: its caution, its humility, and its overweening respect for the limits of American power.

Halberstam may be enamored of the Bush administration for practicing détente at the end of the Cold War, but he cannot avoid recording their perfidy in the Balkans in their last years in office. Those "cautious" men, who took pride in passing on the world no better or worse than they found it, were too cautious and passive to prevent the slaughter in Yugoslavia. Their goal in the Cold War had been not improvement of the terrible situation but maintenance of the status quo. How surprising that in the post–Cold War era they opposed change, opposed action, and favored the status quo, even as it crumbled tragically before their eyes. Even the Gulf war, certainly the Bush administration's finest hour, aimed at restoring a status quo ante, at the price of keeping the world's most dangerous man in power in Iraq. The Gulf war's dénouement was another triumph of caution over confidence.

Halberstam is a man who appreciates ironies, but he does not seem to appreciate the irony that it was precisely these old pros who, having learned the lessons of Vietnam, proceeded to get everything wrong in Yugoslavia. Here were the very kinds of people he wished had been at the top levels of decision-making in the early years of Vietnam. Here, finally, were the experts, men such as Eagleburger, Powell, and Baker, one an expert on Yugoslavia, another a battle-tested general who remembered all the errors of the military campaign in Vietnam, the third a pragmatist of the moderate and bipartisan center who had tried to control the excesses of Reaganism in the 1980s. Here was "the old moderate bipartisan foreign policy establishment," distrusted by "the Right," and partly for that reason esteemed by Halberstam, now turning a collective blind eye to atrocities and to "evil" in the Balkans.

And Halberstam still cannot help admiring them, even as he chronicles their failures. Eagleburger was "as able a man as the State Department had produced in the postwar era." He had a "sixth sense of the future." He knew that an ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia would be horrendous, and he knew, too, that his own administration would not want to intervene to stop it. Eagleburger was smart, Halberstam writes, smart enough to know that this was "not something Larry Eagleburger wanted to be a part of." That was another fruit of post-Vietnam wisdom: the caution of pure careerism.

Powell, of course, was the living embodiment of Halberstam's post-Vietnam wisdom. The Vietnam-era generals had not asked often enough the key question, "What if?" "What if the Vietcong do not collapse under American bombardment?" And so Powell took the opposite tack. For Powell, the question was always "What if?" And as his civilian colleagues learned, the answer to one "What if?" led always to another "What if?" and then to another. The Vietnam-era generals had lied to their commander-in-chief by insisting that they could win with fewer men than they actually believed were necessary. Powell lied by telling his superiors that he needed more men than he actually believed were necessary. As Halberstam records,

> When the top civilians asked what it might cost to intervene militarily, Powell would show his lack of enthusiasm by giving them a high estimate. One reason he had always put the number of troops needed to do the job so high—over two hundred thousand—was not necessarily that he felt it would take that many. It was a test for the civilians: How much do you really want this, how high a price are you willing to pay?

The Vietnam War had been fought without sufficient public understanding and support. From that dubious judgment Powell concluded that the American people would never support any war. In opposing a war against Iraq in 1991, Powell argued that "the American people do not want their young dying for $1.50 a gallon oil." He was so determined to avoid another Vietnam that he was willing to embrace national paralysis.

Then there was Baker, the skilled centrist who brought the Soviet Union in for a "soft landing." How surprising was it that this bulwark of the realist wing of the establishment would be the one to declare about Yugoslavia that "we don't have a dog in that fight"? That wing of the establishment did not have a dog in *any* fight. Even Halberstam notes that Baker's statement "summed up the Bush-Baker view of the entire new turbulent post–Cold War world, a place that was so messy, with so few choices that were positive rather than negative, that it was better, all in all, simply to ignore them." Halberstam prefers to blame an indifferent American public for tying the Bush administration's hands, but the Bush administration's approach to the world sprang directly and naturally from a worldview that emphasized a preposterous degree of prudence and the inviolable limits of American power.

SMALL WONDER, TOO, that when the liberal establishment took power again, in 1993, they fared little better. The two wings were in many respects indistinguishable. Warren Christopher, who had become the dean of the liberal establishment, had no more taste for per-

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sonal involvement in Bosnia than had Lawrence Eagleburger. Sandy Berger, the onetime McGovern campaigner, after years as a Washington lawyer was now as much the foreign policy and political "pragmatist" as James Baker. When others suggested taking military action against Milosevic or Saddam Hussein, his answer was always a Powell-like "What if?" And, of course, in the early phase of the Clinton administration, Powell himself remained the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, dispensing his "What if?"s to an even more uncertain crowd of civilian colleagues.

Then there was Anthony Lake, the quintessential post-Vietnam liberal, who had taken every twisty turn from gung-ho Vietnam diplomat to conscience-stricken anti-war resignee, and then had come back into power after the Cold War, ready to make America good again. But Lake, like the liberal establishment as a whole, was damaged goods. He was "ambivalent about the use of power," Halberstam writes. He was ambivalent about almost everything. (In Halberstam's index there is an entry under Lake's name: "emotional ambivalence of.") His view of foreign policy, Halberstam writes, "always had a certain moral rectitude." But Lake could not bring himself to act on his moral principles. He wrung his hands over the Balkan slaughter, but did nothing to stop it. When Lake was asked by Samantha Power why he had done nothing to stop the genocide in Rwanda, he said that it was because he "was busy with Bosnia." Busy doing what?

Three senior Clinton officials stood out from this crowd of establishment pragmatists and heartbroken hand-wringers. They were Madeleine Albright, Richard Holbrooke, and General Wesley Clark, the U.S. commander of NATO who led the successful war over Kosovo. All three wanted to do more in the Balkans than their colleagues. All three, with varying degrees of courage and intensity, urged more aggressive military action against Milosevic. And all three spent most of their time flailing in futility.

Albright was never considered one of the liberal establishment boys, and perhaps not just for the obvious reason. Even Halberstam treats Albright with a certain disdain, and one suspects that this is because she was not really part of his post-Vietnam world. "She had not been caught up in the bitter ideological wars of that overheated period," he remarks, "when much of the debate centered not just around Vietnam, but what it said about American foreign policy in general." Albright had fewer doubts about American foreign policy in general. Halberstam writes, as if it were something unusual, that Albright "had, because of her family history, a powerful antipathy toward military aggression and genocide." Like some weirdly unreconstructed Achesonian, she still remembered Munich.

Holbrooke, unlike Lake, was not ambivalent about power. Nor did he lack for confidence, either in himself or in his nation. Was it any wonder that he never rose to a top position in the Clinton administration? He was too strong-willed and self-seeking for a liberal establishment mafia, led by Warren Christopher, that prided itself on a style of (usually phony) self-effacement. Even after Holbrooke's diplomatic settlement of the Bosnian crisis in 1995, he was not given the top job at the State Department or the NSC. Indeed, nobody who wielded power effectively ever made it to the top: Wesley Clark scored the most impressive military victory of Clinton's eight years, and was rewarded by being forced into early retirement by that living symbol of the establishment's "bipartisan center," William Cohen.

Halberstam does not really blame the establishment for these failures to act, however, any more than he blames the Bush administration. He is more inclined to blame Clinton, who in so many ways was not a member of that establishment. Halberstam is pretty brutal in exposing Clinton's sins, though at this point they hardly need to be exposed. Clinton avoided hard decisions about military intervention. He refused to make the public case for intervention even after he had ordered it. He ran from Somalia after the United States suffered casualties, believing that the American people would not sustain a further commitment. He hesitated in Haiti and in Bosnia. He did nothing to stop genocide in Rwanda. He was loath to take responsibility for foreign policy errors. He put off decisions so long that options diminished, and then lashed out at his advisers for leaving him so few choices.

In the end, however, it is not even really Clinton that Halberstam blames. After all, Clinton was a brilliant politician, with a better sense of the national mood than anyone else in American politics. He gave the American people only what they told him they wanted. And they did not tell him they wanted an ambitious foreign policy. In this respect, Halberstam suggests, the American people got precisely the president and the foreign policy that they wanted and deserved. For Halberstam—as, indeed, for many conservatives in the 1990s—the whole Clinton phenomenon was actually proof of the rot at the core of America after the Cold War.

But this is a dodge, and also a slander. The American people have never conceived it to be their job to decide the course of American foreign policy, and it is not their job. Americans have their own lives to lead, their own professions to master. It is not their responsibility to pay close enough attention to the Balkans or Rwanda to know when intervention has become critical, and they do not seek that

Manifestation

So you have become several morning voices since
evening grew too deep to speak into. So you are
another, sheltering a little flask of sorrow, with
two eyes caged in wildness, lids too much like rainfall,

lashes a soprano's liquid pause. Since one must
worship the trees (their winter branches bones
in the fingers) and one must worship the earth
(astronomical as bodies mingled), I tell you to fall back

from the many windows beading a necklace
with their night. The world is always speaking hems
of dresses, evergreens, always speaking never.
The world is the jawbone of where we cannot go.

The snow has the embroider of calm dogs lying,
has you fallen long like rope among the flowers.
Its briarpatch of handmade paper expresses
the blankness of thousands. Its fire, a hand

that hungers unlike anything, its bloodstream
spoken like a texture. You will understand flesh
better now, its fireflies deciphered, its clicking
rosary beads of wordless sound. When you open

your mouth, those few birds that fly out cast
a calcium of swans. They pass aquariums for fear
of watching at the window of another creature's life.
They change around your center like the rain.

Jennifer Militello

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responsibility. The American people did not tell Dean Acheson to create "situations of strength" around the world after 1945. He told them that was what was necessary, and for the most part they agreed.

Much as it may be uncomfortable for some to admit, the American public has generally placed its trust in the competence and the expertise of the foreign policy establishment, even when that trust has been misplaced, as it has for three of the past four decades. Foreign policy, unlike domestic policy, really has been the special province of an elite class of practitioners and thinkers. This does not mean that foreign policy is conducted undemocratically. Much to the chagrin of the foreign policy elite, presidents and members of Congress make foreign policy. But even they are influenced, often heavily influenced, by the consensus views of the foreign policy establishment. That is why the United States paid such a price for the establishment crack-up in Vietnam.

ARE WE STILL paying that price? Time will tell. One hears everywhere that after September 11 "everything has changed," and it would be nice to believe this about foreign policy, too. For a decade now, the foreign policy establishment has blamed its failures on an American public unwilling to suffer casualties abroad. Presumably, that canard can no longer be employed after the recent terrorist attacks, in which we sustained five thousand casualties (and all of them non-combatants). Now we will see what our foreign policy establishment does in the absence of that excuse.

So far signs are abundant that there may be as much continuity as discontinuity. The horrors of September 11 may have rocked the nation and turned the normally pacific American citizenry bellicose, but World Trade Center or no World Trade Center, the old arguments about American power continue. The liberal establishment wrings its hands and asks why the Muslims hate us. Isn't it something that we have done, in the Middle East or elsewhere? It is possible that even the worst attack in the nation's history has not shaken the American foreign policy establishment out of a post-Vietnam syndrome still vibrant in its fourth decade.

The early stages of the war in Afghanistan seemed designed to avoid a heavy American military involvement. Pentagon officials merely had to whisper the words "quagmire" and "Somalia." And while Colin Powell is back in power, fretting over the "Arab street" and arguing against taking the war to Iraq, the hard-charging General Clark is doing commentary for CNN. As much as we may hope that the United States, after the horrendous shock of those attacks, has lost the hesitancy, the ambivalence, and the moral confusion that have characterized its attitudes toward the use of its power ever since its misfortunes in Vietnam, this, as the editorial writers like to say, remains to be seen. Perhaps through this test of fire, the establishment will regain the confidence it had after World War II. The American people desperately need it to do so. ■

Let Us Now Praise Famous Women

By DAVID QUINT

Famous Women
by Giovanni Boccaccio
translated by Virginia Brown

(Harvard University Press, 530 pp., $29.95)

VIRGIL LIED ABOUT Dido. The queen who founded Carthage did, in fact, commit suicide, but not out of insane love for Aeneas. That was poetic invention, since the Trojan hero had lived centuries before her. The real facts of Dido's death were the following. A native African king lusted after her and threatened to attack her growing city if she refused his hand in marriage. Dido was caught between her sense of patriotic duty—she declared to her fellow citizens that "we are born for father and fatherland"—and her resolution to pursue a chaste widowhood. She had a great pyre built on which she pretended to appease the spirit of her dead spouse Sychaeus. Then, declaring that "in accordance with your wish, my people, I go to my husband," Dido stabbed herself and expired. She removed herself as a potential cause of her city's destruction, and she died an exemplary model of civic devotion and unsullied widowhood. How different from Virgil's depiction of a woman undone by the throes of erotic passion!

The true story of Dido was recounted by Giovanni Boccaccio in *De mulieribus claris*, or *Famous Women*, a collection of one hundred six short lives of women that the author of the *Decameron* composed in Latin in 1361 and 1362. A monument of classical scholarship for its time, it contains the biographies of women renowned for valor in warfare and fearlessness in the face of death, for writing and the arts, for political rulership, and for the particularly womanly virtues of marital chastity and devotion to husbands living and dead. The lives often end with a passage of moral reflection and exhortation to follow the shining example that their heroines have left behind.

The book became immensely popular in the late Middle Ages, and it was quickly translated into the major languages of Western Europe. It has now been given an expert and readable English translation by Virginia Brown and published in the I Tatti Renaissance Library series, a major new editorial project that is bringing out the classic texts of Italian Renaissance humanism in handsome bilingual Latin and English volumes. Evidently modeled on the Loeb Classical Library, this series will allow English readers the opportunity to sample the writing and the thought that made Italians of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in the words of Jacob Burckhardt, the "firstborn among the sons of modern Europe." *Famous Women* is an appropriate book with which to inaugurate this series, since it stands at a cusp in cultural history between medieval attitudes and the new mental universe of the Renaissance.

What makes Boccaccio's book modern? He touts the originality of his project in his preface, where he tells us that it is the first collection of the lives of pagan women, intended, Boccaccio says, to complement *De viris illustribus*, or *Lives of Illustrious Men*, which his friend and contemporary Petrarch was composing but would leave unfinished. Both men were consciously

DAVID QUINT is professor of English and comparative literature at Yale University. His most recent book is *Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy* (Princeton University Press).

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reviving what they knew to be an ancient tradition of biography, although they had few classical models available to them. Boccaccio knew, of course, that one could find stories of the lives of remarkable women in collections of saints' lives such as *The Golden Legend*, by Jacob of Voragine. But he pointedly excludes from his own book accounts of Christian virgin-martyrs and miracle-workers:

> Following the commands and example of their holy Teacher, Hebrew and Christian women commonly steeled themselves for the sake of true and everlasting glory to an endurance often at odds with human nature. Pagan women, however, reached their goal, admittedly with remarkable strength of character, either through some natural gift or instinct or, as seems more likely, through a keen desire for the fleeting glory of this world; sometimes they endured grievous troubles in the face of Fortune's assaults.

The achievements that interest Boccaccio are purely human ones—perhaps all-too-human ones, since women accomplished them. He repeatedly remarks on the general inferiority of their sex, and congratulates his heroines for being man-like exceptions. If the exemplary virtues and strengths that they exhibited could be attained by mere women, this argument seems to imply, they are within the reach of all human beings.

These virtues are of this world, not directed toward a Christian afterlife of which Boccaccio's pagan women were unaware. They are primarily moral and political virtues exercised in the theater of history governed by Fortune, which begins here to shift from an older medieval concept of cyclical change that still governed Boccaccio's earlier work, *De casibus virorum illustrium*, or *The Downfalls of Illustrious Men*, with its stories of the rise and fall of princes. Fortune now becomes a more dynamic figure for the forces of time and contingency: it can oppose human endeavors and yet provide the occasions and the raw material for them. The reward that spurs these endeavors also belongs to this world. In place of the eternal salvation promised by Christianity, Boccaccio's heroines aspire to the secular immortality of fame.

Boccaccio knows just how questionable such aspirations are within conventional religious schemes of thought. As we turn the page to the first chapter of his work, we encounter none other than Eve, who was persuaded by the devil that "she could attain greater glory if she disobeyed the one law that God had laid upon her." Her quest for personal fame plunged humanity into the fallen world of history in the first place. And he acknowledges that one can become famous through crimes and immoralities as well as through virtuous deeds: witness Medea, Circe, Cleopatra. Still, Boccaccio designs his book to be precisely the *praemium*, or reward, of earthly glory that his subjects sought, and to rescue them from the ravages of time. For Boccaccio the writer, too, aspires to glory: he will make these women famous, and they in turn will make him famous.

A secularizing view of history, a focus on pagan antiquity, and what Burckhardt called the "modern idea of fame" marks the emergence in Boccaccio's book of humanist modes of thought that would not find their full expression until the century that succeeded his own. The plan of *Famous Women* de-sacralizes pagan history itself. After his opening chapters on the lives of Eve and Semiramis, Boccaccio turns to six pagan goddesses. Using a form of mythographical interpretation called euhemerism (after its ancient Greek founder Euhemerus, who flourished in the fourth century B.C.E.), he explains that they were not goddesses at all, but mortal women with a real existence in history.

He explains also that it was their political power or famous deeds that caused them to be divinized and accorded cults. Ceres invented agriculture; Minerva taught wool-working, the cultivation of olives, warfare, and mathematics; and Venus, well, she founded the first brothels. It was a "marvelous jest on the part of Fortune," Boccaccio remarks, that caused Opis, the wife of King Saturn, a woman who had "died in old age, had turned to dust, and had been damned to hell, to be regarded as a goddess and honored for such a long time by almost the entire world."

The same secularizing turn of mind is present in the story of Paulina, a Roman woman who is tricked by her seducer into thinking that she is sleeping with the god Anubis, who seeks to impregnate her with a divine offspring. This is the one story of the collection that has the wit and the narrative flavor of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which was composed a decade earlier. It is, in fact, directly related to the *Decameron*, providing the classical model for the story—far more explosive in its implications—of Frate Alberto, who seduces the ninny madonna Lisetta in the guise of the angel Gabriel who announced the Incarnation to Mary. (Had a gullible Mary herself been similarly tricked?)

A nascent historicism underlies Boccaccio's efforts to extract the kernel of truth from the fables that surround it. This historical consciousness would be the most important achievement of humanist thought, and it enabled Petrarch to invent a "dark ages" or "middle ages" separating his present from a classical past now understood as alien and historically distinct from his own time. Boccaccio's retelling of the true facts about Dido fits this pattern; and Boccaccio also informs us that at least one ancient author maintained that Homer's Penelope had committed adultery with one of her suitors. He is unwilling to believe this accusation himself, but he still sees fit to include it.

The structure of *Famous Women* itself moves from fiction to fact. Its first half treats the heroines of myth and of the poets: Homer, Virgil, and Ovid. With the figure of Lucretia in Chapter 48, the collection reaches recorded history, particularly the history of the Roman republic, where Boccaccio finds the greatest storehouse of exemplary lives. Republican virtue—matronly chastity, stoic endurance when confronted by torture and death, loyalty to husbands and fathers, devotion to the state above and beyond family considerations—constitutes a historically specific moral code that need not always conflict with Christian teachings, but still poses an alternative to them. Boccaccio accepts this classical morality on its own terms, including the distinctly un-Christian suicides of Dido, Lucretia, and at least ten others among his heroines. The wives of the defeated Cimbrians, he says, who killed their children and themselves rather than fall into slavery, left behind an amazing example of constancy, for the admiration of all posterity.

The life of Zenobia, queen of Palmyra during the third century A.D., culminates the book. It occupies Chapter 100, and Boccaccio may have originally intended to end his collection here: the *Decameron* contains one hundred stories. Zenobia founded an eastern empire and resisted the power of Rome. According to Boccaccio, she shunned womanly occupations from childhood and so toughened her body that she could subdue her male

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contemporaries in wrestling and gymnastic contests. She marched with her armies, as their commander and as a fighter, and was able to drink with her generals. She learned Greek and Egyptian and, like a good humanist scholar, read and memorized all the Latin, Greek, and barbarian histories.

At her husband's death, Zenobia gained the throne as regent, and under her rulership none of her eastern neighbors dared to resist the power of Palmyra. Yet, for all her manly achievements, Zenobia also practiced female virtues. She exercised the strictest sexual morality, lying with her husband only for the sake of procreation. She managed her household treasure carefully, though she was capable of liberality when it was required. When Zenobia was finally defeated and displayed in triumph by the Roman emperor Aurelian, she finished her life with her children in retirement in Tivoli amid other Roman matrons.

This eventual re-absorption of the warrior and ruler Zenobia into a conventional female existence in a community of wives and mothers raises questions about Boccaccio's attitude toward the heroines whom he celebrates, and about just how far he holds up for imitation an ancient world in which women appear to have enjoyed more freedom of movement and of action than in his contemporary society. The portrait of the strong woman ruler Zenobia may be intended as a compliment to Joanna, queen of Sicily and Jerusalem, Boccaccio's erstwhile patron, to whom he devotes the final chapter of his book. Boccaccio acknowledges that Queen Joanna is the ideal—and, we may conclude, the true—addressee of *Famous Women*, even as he dedicates the book to Lady Andrea Acciaiuoli, a fellow Tuscan, who was a member of Joanna's court. (We do have to wonder why Boccaccio includes the story of the legendary Pope Joan as the first of six lives of modern women that he adds after the narrative of Zenobia. This woman supposedly masqueraded as a male cleric and became pope, but gave the game away by giving birth in the middle of a religious procession to the Lateran Palace. Her presence in the collection would hardly have been a compliment to the queen of the same name.)

But does Boccaccio really approve of women, however virtuous, taking part in a man's world? *Famous Women* may be a proto-humanist book, but it less clear whether it is a proto-feminist one. Boccaccio's opinion of women notoriously varies from one of his works to another, and is impossible to pin down. *Famous Women* apparently lies chronologically in Boccaccio's writings between the *Decameron*, with its salacious stories addressed to a readership of idle ladies and its apparent sympathy for the sexual desires and needs of women, and the *Corbaccio*, Boccaccio's brilliant and brilliantly nasty misogynistic tirade, in which a scholar is warned away from his love of a certain widow by the spirit of the woman's dead husband, who makes a special trip out of Purgatory to reveal the truth about her in literally nauseating detail.

The temptation to read the different treatments of women in these works in terms of Boccaccio's evolving biography proved irresistible to an earlier generation of critics. They spoke of a late crisis and conversion that turned the writer against womankind. But it now seems sounder—especially given the difficulties of assigning firm dates to books that Boccaccio revised at various stages of his career—to consider the shifts in attitude in terms of the different genres to which Boccaccio turned his virtuoso literary genius. He depicts women with realism in the stories of the *Decameron*, he satirizes them in the diatribe of the *Corbaccio*, and he praises them in the dignified Latin of *Famous Women*. But this praise seldom goes unqualified.

A typical gesture of Boccaccio's book is to give to individual women with one hand what it takes away from their sex with the other. "How much more should women be extolled," Boccaccio declares in his preface, "almost all of whom are endowed by nature with soft, frail bodies and sluggish minds, when they take on a manly spirit, show remarkable intelligence and bravery, and dare to execute deeds that would be extremely difficult even for men?" Women are the weaker sex, physically and mentally, and his heroines are exceptions whose highest praise is to be "manly." Busa was a model of liberality, while most women are habitually stingy; Tertia tolerated her husband's infidelity, while most women are very suspicious creatures by nature; Triaria braved battle, while most women faint at the noise of a mouse; Sulpicia endured the hardships of exile with her husband, while most women will hardly do any light housework; Cornificia and Proba became poets, while most women are slothful and confine themselves to idle lives in the household.

Boccaccio's most serious charge against women comes in Chapter 55, in which he writes that their practice of wearing finery and jewelry has feminized culture in general.

> Thanks to feminine ornaments, masculine wealth has been depleted while women parade about in royal finery; men become paupers through the loss of their ancestral inheritance while women become rich gaining it; deserving women are honored, but so are ignoble ones.... But what is there to say? This is a woman's world, and men have become womanish.

The passage echoes contemporary Franciscan preaching, in which, as the historian Diane Owen Hughes has shown, married women (along with Jews) became scapegoats to explain the dynamics of the new capitalist economy of the fourteenth-century Italian city-state. Their insatiable appetite for luxury fashions, so this argument goes, drives their husbands to make money; and, as Boccaccio suggests, it has turned them from the aristocratic pursuits of war and agriculture to the less manly professions of merchants and banker-usurers. Boccaccio, the citizen of mercantile Florence, is talking here: this is misogyny with a clear social correlative.

And yet *Famous Women* undeniably contains seeds of a new feminism. From its opening chapter on Eve, it acknowledges the value of female beauty, however transient it may be, and accounts it a legitimate aspect of a woman's fame. The modern-day feminist may not be impressed, but Boccaccio pointedly departs here from medieval attitudes that saw women's beauty as the tool of the devil and adduced Eve as the clearest case in point. Moreover, his book presents a gallery of exemplary figures who show that women can attain virtue and independent action if they so choose, and it implicitly exhorts its women readers to imitate them. The exhortation becomes explicit in the chapter dedicated to the poetess Cornificia, which contradicts the book's other characterizations of women's intellectual capacities and puts them on an equal standing with men.

> How glorious it is for a woman to scorn womanish concerns and to turn her mind to the study of the great poets! Shame on slothful women and on those pitiful creatures who lack self-confidence! As if they were born for idleness and for the marriage bed, they convince themselves that they are useful only for the embraces of men, for giving birth, and for raising children. Yet, if women are willing to apply themselves to study, they share with men the ability to do everything that makes men famous.

To be sure, this is a humanist scholar's peculiar conception of equality between the sexes. Through study, women can be as good scholars and writers as men: indeed, a woman able to read Boccaccio's Latin may already be halfway there. Boccaccio

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mystifies the power relations in his culture that limit women to their roles as wives and mothers; the women are said to persuade themselves to accept these roles rather than be confined to them by a male-dominated society. It may be that *Famous Women* also tacitly accepts the roles of daughter, wife, mother, and widow that were normative to Boccaccio's society: we once again recall Dido as a model of devoted widowhood. Still, women here are urged to achieve fame beyond those roles.

In at least one instance, moreover, Boccaccio attacks a standard treatment of women in his contemporary society. The chapter dedicated to the vestal virgin Rhea Ilia, who somehow became impregnated and gave birth to Romulus and Remus, includes a condemnation of forcing girls into convents.

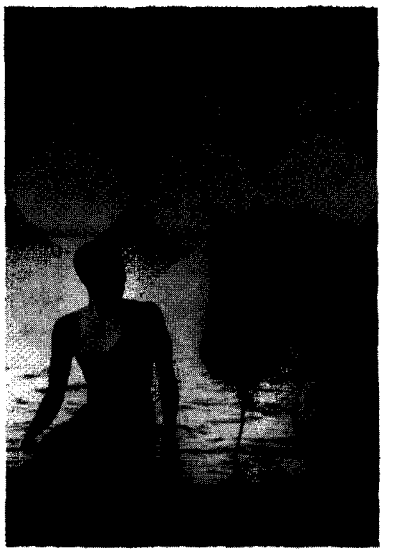
> There are certain individuals who are greedy enough to take away from their daughters their pittance of a dowry. Under the pretext of religion, they confine—or should I say condemn?—these girls to nuns' cells, sometimes when they are still very young, sometimes when almost mature, but always under force. Then the claim is made that a virgin has been dedicated to God whose prayers will advance her father's affairs and gain Paradise for him when he dies.... Wretched are those parents and near relations and anyone else at all who think that others can endure what they themselves flee from as intolerable!... Let these fools realize, then, if they do not want to measure the strength of others by their own, that girls must not be consecrated to God while they are ignorant or too young or under coercion.

The girls unfit for a religious life scheme to escape their prisons or to take lovers, turning convents, Boccaccio says, into brothels. This denunciation exceeds conventional complaints about the abuses of the cloister. Here, too, Boccaccio acknowledges a link between economics and the social disposition of women, and he observes with biting irony that the daughters placed in convents to save money are further expected to pray for the success of their fathers' business affairs. Defenders of women in the succeeding centuries seldom rose to the eloquence of this attack on paternal tyranny.

BOCCACCIO'S BOOK WOULD, in fact, become the basis of a feminist project. Christine de Pisan derived seventy percent of the material for *The Book of the City of Ladies*, written in French in 1405, from *Famous Women*. She uses Boccaccio's biographies to counter slanders against the morality and the ability of women as she builds the allegorical city of ladies that is her book itself. Properly upheld by modern scholars as an early manifesto of the equality of the sexes, Christine's book is nonetheless as deeply committed to the traditional social roles of women as is Boccaccio's—chastity, she asserts, is their highest virtue; and in other respects it is a more culturally conservative work.

The humanist dimensions of Boccaccio's work are largely lost on Christine: she tells Virgil's version of Dido's suicide, not Boccaccio's, and her third book is dedicated to the lives of female saints. Christine is out to defend women, not pagan culture. Naturally enough, she omits most of Boccaccio's disparaging remarks about women, even if she has to whitewash the story of Medea, who just loved Jason "with too great and too constant a love": Christine omits the bit about Medea killing her and Jason's children in revenge. In general, Christine condenses as she translates the lives of *Famous Women*, and her flatter versions lack the verve and the charm of her much greater literary predecessor. *The Book of the City of Ladies* is more politically correct, and duller.

Christine de Pisan's work is a distinguished early example of a whole line of books that would descend from *Famous Women*: collections of short biographies of celebrated women, sometimes intermixed with those of celebrated men. They had become a staple of children's literature by the nineteenth century, and they continue to the present day. (I particularly recall a book of famous heroes and heroines in my early reading, one with facing-page illustrations and what I now realize was a British inflection, in which I first encountered Boadicea along with Hereward the Wake.) An underground feminism already inhabited such books as the indefatigable Mrs. Anna Jameson's *Memoirs of Celebrated Female Sovereigns* (1832) and Mary Elizabeth Hewitt's *Heroines of History* (1852). The models that they presented arguably worked as forcefully as liberationist doctrine to encourage generations of young girls to grow up to be strong and independent women. Nowadays, the agenda is out in the open, as the following recent volumes suggest: *Girls Who Rocked the World: Heroines from Sacagawea to Sheryl Swoopes; Women Who Made a Scene: Heroines, Villainesses, Eccentrics; Outrageous Women of Ancient Times.* Zenobia features prominently in the last-named book. Whatever his intentions—and it may be that feminism was a long-term outgrowth of the humanism that he pioneered—Boccaccio launched a lasting genre that urged women, as well as men, to reach for glory, and gave them examples to live by. ■



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WASHINGTON DIARIST

White Hope

FROM THE NEO-NAZI PERspective, September 11 shouldn't be hard to interpret. After all, the 19 terrorists who participated all belonged to the broad ethnic category that white supremacists affectionately call "mud people." But zip over to the website of the National Alliance, ranked by watchdogs as the most dangerous hate group in America, and you'll find some oddly counterintuitive postings. The site is short on vicious rants about Arabs and Muslims, and long on features like "To The Government of Israel: 18 Demands." Calling on Israel to, among other things, "Stop the institutionalized racism which treats non-Jews born in Israel as second-class citizens," "Stop acts of terror which deprive Palestinians of their dignity, freedom, property, or lives," and "Apologize to the people of Lebanon for the acts of war Israel has committed against them for over a quarter century," the list reads like it was penned by a bunch of, well, "towel heads." Or, better yet, by some bleeding-heart human rights group. And it's not just Palestinians they're fretting over. In his weekly radio addresses, National Alliance Chairman William Pierce has, of late, expressed distress over America's "terror-bombing of Baghdad" and its "blockade that is starving Iraqi children." He condemns the war in Afghanistan, praises the people there "who will fight, even against overwhelming odds, to keep their independence and their way of life," and advocates overthrowing the pro-war regime in Pakistan. Similar sentiments are available on the website of the wildly racist World Church of the Creator, where the "Reverend" Matt Hale's statement about September 11 includes nary an anti-Arab utterance, but decries both the plight of the Palestinians and the outrage of "American bombs [raining] down upon Iraqi civilians."

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT THINGS couldn't get any more unsettling, some of America's biggest bigots sound like they're bucking for a column in *The Nation*. It's not just that radical racists admire Al Qaeda's grit—though National Alliance official Billy Roper did recently lament, "I wish our members had half as much testicular fortitude." Nor is their praise merely a by-product of their overwhelming hatred of the Jews. White supremacists and Islamicists like Osama bin Laden just plain agree on a lot of things—in particular, that globalism and multiculturalism are the über-enemies, and that separatism and cultural purity are the answer. As Pierce has said of Muslims overseas, "Because we are separate and both of us would like to stay that way, we need have *no conflict*." In fact, for neo-Nazis, the real conflict is with their fellow Americans who want to go over to the Muslim world and make them more like us.

BIN LADEN ISN'T THE FIRST STRANGE bedfellow with whom white racists have snuggled up. "Louis Farrakhan has been lauded [by white supremacists], and there were a couple of times where either [neo-Nazi leader Tom] Metzger or someone else actually met with Farrakhan," says Brian Levin, a professor with the Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino. In part, the bond with Farrakhan, like the bond with bin Laden, arose from the recognition of a shared enemy. "They both dig from the same well of anti-Semitism," says Levin. But there's more to it: The Nation of Islam, Al Qaeda, and the Aryan Nation all want to shield their members from the defiling influence of other, baser cultures. So the fact that white suprems don't want to be in the same room with the Taliban suits everyone just fine. "The modern form of white supremacy ... is this idea that we should all retreat to ethnically and culturally pure nations," says Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

NOT SURPRISINGLY, GLOBALIZATION has emerged as the ultimate bogeyman for racial separatists of all hues. And while the Jews are seen as the root of this ugly trend, America (as Zionist lapdog) is considered equally guilty. Racialist groups, says Potok, "have come to see the United States as the global spearhead of multiculturalism and multiracialism." Far from wrapping themselves in the American flag like Klansmen of generations past, says Potok, today's white suprems are burning it. "They are very much in the same camp as the Taliban in a sense. They see culturally and racially disparate nations being steamrolled by the American monoculture of McDonald's, strip malls, and multiracialists. Bin Laden speaks of American culture reaching into the farthest corners of the world. American Nazis see the same thing, and they've become decentralists." Witness the skinheads who rioted at the WTO conclave in Seattle, and the high praise the entire melee elicited from white suprems like Matt Hale.

NONE OF WHICH IS TO SAY THAT white supremacists plan to link arms with their nonwhite brothers. In fact, the whole appeal of anti-imperialism for neo-Nazis is that it maintains cultural distance. "I don't intend to be misleading," Pierce assures me. "My primary concern is not really for Palestinian freedom or how they run their lives over there—or for the Iraqis." Geographic segregation and noninterference are his aim. "If the people in a country like Afghanistan, say, are practicing the most nutcase extremist form of Islam they want, I don't consider that my business. If they want to make their women wear head-to-toe burqas.... If they want to have sixteen wives instead of one wife.... If they want to stand on their heads in the hot sun and meditate, that's their business. I don't believe we need to go over and teach them our way." For the most part, Pierce drawls, his group's statements on the Middle East are aimed at highlighting the injustice and hypocrisy of U.S. meddling in that region. "It's bizarre," says Potok. "They sound like Trotskyites. What they're saying in effect is that we should stand shoulder to shoulder with Third World peoples in their anti-imperialist struggle against the U.S."

BUT EVEN AS HE CLAIMS NOT TO CARE what Muslims do in their own lands, Pierce can't help suggesting that they're doing something right. "I presume Muslim fundamentalists want to put into practice a society where they not only are concerned that their women conduct themselves in a certain manner and their men conduct themselves in a certain manner, they also want to protect their way of life," he says with obvious approval. "And when they see that threatened, they take offensive action." Cultural infiltration, he adds, runs counter to Islam. "The Jewish philosophy is to use goyim however they can to advance Jewish interest. But I don't think Muslims even think that way. They would just like to have the corrupting influence out of their lives—religious Muslims, I'm talking about. People like Osama bin Laden."

PIERCE'S SYMPATHIES HAVEN'T GONE unnoticed. "I've gotten a few letters from Palestinians who have said how pleased they are that somebody in the United States is picking a reasonable position," he says. "They knew not everyone agreed with the government policies, but no one had had the courage to speak out against it." Except the nation's white supremacists—champion of oppressed "mud people" everywhere.

MICHELLE COTTLE

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In the Public Interest

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Featuring ideas for an "All-American Energy Plan" from the Rocky Mountain Institute, Joseph Romm, and David Morris.

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